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SEPTEMBER 2015

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LOUIS VUITTON

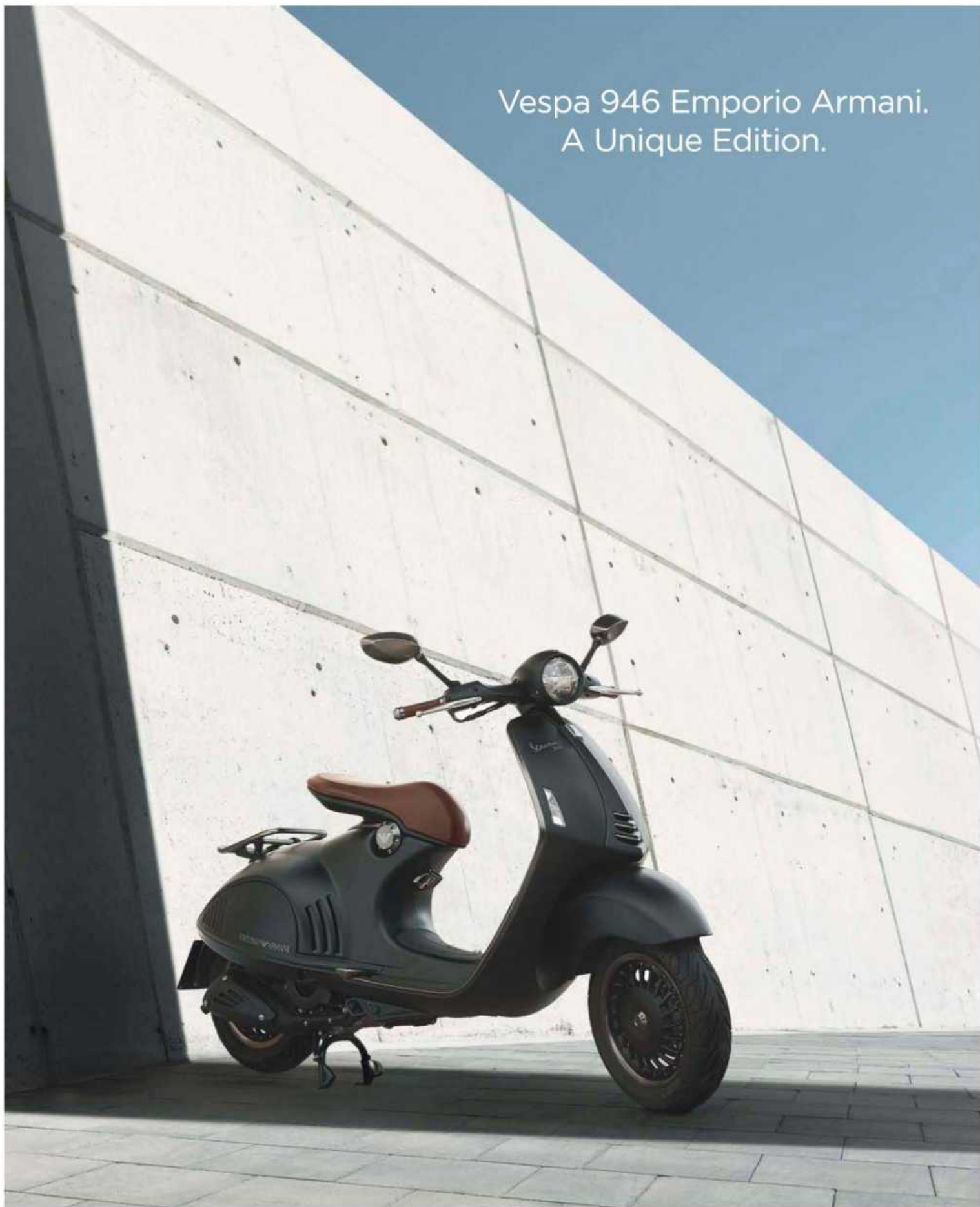




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LES BEIGES

NATURAL IS A STYLE



CHANEL



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On the cover The Parker Hotel Palm Springs.

Photographed by Kristian Schuller.

Styled by Peggy Schuller. Make-up, Sophie Haig.



Cipriana Quann (left) wears dress, Sportmax. Bracelets, all Eto. Sunglasses, Prada. TK Quann (right) wears coat and belt, both Kirsty Ward. Necklace, Bex Rox. Loafers, Gucci. Sunglasses, Kate Spade. Beauty: Sunleja SPF15, Sisley

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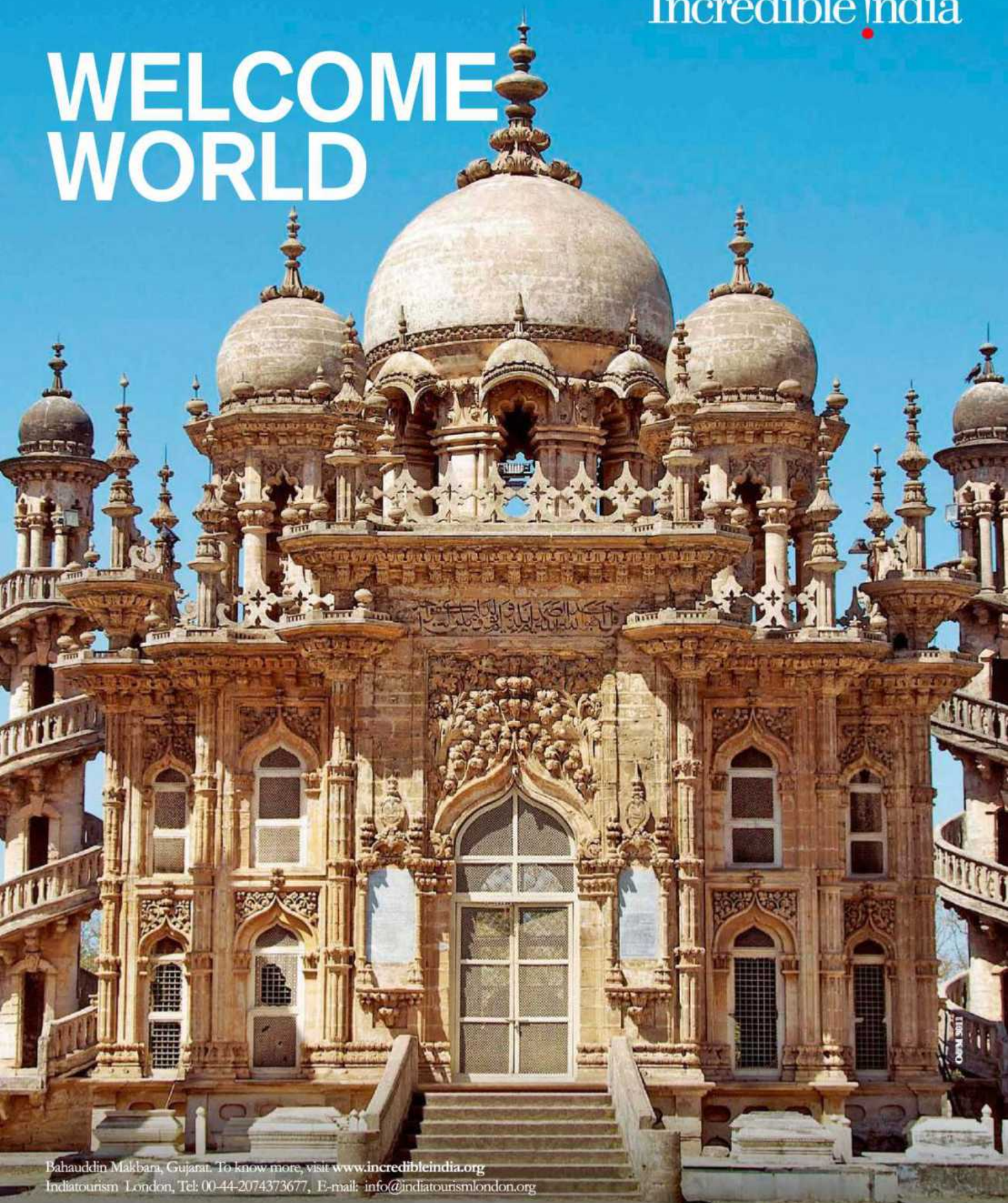
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EDITOR'S LETTER



AFTER THE EXTRAORDINARILY LONG HOLIDAY in Mexico we find ourselves in a taxi on our way home. There is something lovely about the prospect of coming home after a proper time away. Wondering whether the roses will be out, imagining the musty, people-less smell of the hall, the icing-sugar delights of your own pillows. Ah, the cosy familiarity of the A4. Ah, the crappy old Lucozade sign and, ah, the bourgeois delights of Chiswick with its shops selling diaphanous clothing and its purposeful women in wedges and terribly good haircuts. But wait a frickin' second. Is this where we live? This pock-marked, dirt-infested, tumbledown, security-shuttered, post-apocalyptic hell zone that is Shepherd's Bush?

If Mexico is Frida Kahlo with flowers in her hair and magic cats and guacamole thick as double cream, Shepherd's Bush is a bin-end, sloppy-seconds, titty-bar-dancing granny who has been on the razz two decades too long and has chewing gum stuck to her head.

'Oh my god!' I groan to Marcus, who can clearly gauge the change in my emotional temperature. 'I cannot believe we're bringing up our children here!'

Then, a week or two after we get back, a pop-up foodie festival arrives in the street around the corner. I have been longing for a pop-up foodie festival to arrive in the street around the corner for 10 years. It turns out to be everything I dreamed of. It's run by gorgeous hipsters in slouchy shorts rustling up Dirty Mojitos and doing unusual things with pulled pork and sauces with names I can't pronounce. I am beaming. Marcus is beaming. We sit down on our upturned crates and suck it all in. A guy comes up and says, 'I'm gonna hustle up some epic slaw, dudes – it's gonna blow your mojo, man!' There is part of me that wants to hug his sunflower of a face. And part of me that wants to jab him in the eye with his upcycled fork.

Where are Mark and Jane when you need them? Mark and Jane are a brother-and-sister team who have lived in Shepherd's Bush all their lives. They run the moped repair shop. Broken bikes pile up around them like junk on a bonfire. There is a crazy, topsy-turvy world brimming with every greasy, oily bit of kit you can possibly imagine. Mark and Jane are themselves so covered in grease only the whites of their eyes are clean. For some reason, they think my husband is ex-SAS. Maybe it's because Marcus keeps threatening to axe the neighbour's door down and tells everyone he has a shotgun. (As I said, it is Shepherd's Bush. But even if you say this sort of thing people still nick your stuff. Once, a burglar broke into our house by throwing an orange through the window pane). Anyway, because Mark and Jane love Marcus, they always fix my moped after it gets trashed by the local kids. So I'm in their workshop, smoking one of Jane's B&Hs, trying not to get my dress caught up in the engines and the exhausts, and thinking how delicious it is here – so cool and petrolly. 'Your bike is ready,' Mark says, 'but I ain't done nothing fancy with it.' By which he means there are no hand or seat covers and I have no windscreen. I thank them as usual, and scoot off. Without the protective gear, I realise immediately that riding the bike is way more thrilling. I am totally exposed, the wind is right in my face, and the exhaust is like a food mixer at full throttle. 'Weeeeeehhheeyeeey,' I scream out loud. And then I realise: these are my streets! This is my hood!

I whizz past the pop-up and flick the hipsters the finger.

This is the new issue of *Condé Nast Traveller*. For those who know home is where you'll find some weird dude wearing nothing but a pyjama top and coughing up a fur-ball in your garden.

Melinda Stevens
Editor



@MelindaStevens3



MelindaLP

All information and travel details are correct at the time of going to press and may no longer be so on the date of publication. Unless otherwise stated, hotel prices are low-season rates and restaurant prices are for a three-course meal for two without drinks.

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Photographie: El Niño

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This month we asked our writers and photographers to tell us about their favourite road trip



Quann Sisters *Models, Palm Springs fashion (p90)*
 TK: 'Travelling through **New Caledonia** on a 10-day music tour left an indelible impression. There were beaches with cerulean waves as far as you could see.' Cipriana: 'In the **South of France** I discovered an amazing winery and fell in love with the beauty that engulfed the place.' *TK and Cipriana are the founders of Urban Bush Babes, a fashion, travel and design website*



David Loftus *Photographer, World on a Plate (p132)*
 'As a stubborn non-driver, my best "road trip" was flying through storms and hurricanes across the USA to eventually pootle around **The Bahamas** in a dusty old Chevrolet. For me, the less time in a car the better!' *David has shot most of Jamie Oliver's cookbooks and is the author of 'Around the World in 80 Dishes'*



Charlotte Sinclair *Writer, Little Karoo (p80)*
 'It has none of the hallmarks of a classic, but mine involves driving the motorways of rural **Italy** in winter and stopping at roadside cafés for prosciutto paninis. It reminds me of scouting wedding venues with my husband-to-be.' *Charlotte has published her second book 'Vogue On: Gianni Versace'*



Dominic Lutyens *Writer, Chengdu (p37)*
 'Mine is a fantasy trip I have yet to take. I would love to tour around the **Loire Valley** and its châteaux. Though the idea sounds a bit stuffy, the castles look spectacular – particularly those fronting rivers, like Chenonceau, the most fairy-tale one of them all.' *Dominic writes for the Financial Times and the Guardian, and is co-author of the book '70s Style & Design'*



Sunshine Flint *Writer, Nashville (p50)*
 'Driving down (and then up, and then down again) the hills of the gorgeous **Côte Vermeille** to the equally stunning Costa Brava. What a trip: from *le petit déjeuner* in Collioure to fresh squid and mussels in Cadaqués as the sun dipped behind the rocky cliffs.' *Sunshine writes about travel, culture and food. She lives in New York with her family*



Kristian Schuller *Photographer, Palm Springs (p90)*
 'Around **Transylvania**, my home country, shooting graveyards, geese, buffalo and an old castle. It was a strange and wonderful experience to be part of a fashion team in a place where I ran through the fields as a child during the Communist era.' *New York-based Kristian studied fashion design with Vivienne Westwood and recently released a second book 'Tales for Oscar'*

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
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WORD OF MOUTH

What's new in London Dubai New York Mexico The Amazon Mali

EDITED BY FIONA KERR

SUCKER PUNCH

Russell Norman has spread his tentacles, from heading up drama at an all-girls school to building a cult-restaurant empire, including Polpo and Spuntino in London. Ahead of the launch of his New York-inspired cookbook, the restaurateur shares his Big Apple bites

CAFE MOTO 'Spuntino was heavily influenced by the atmosphere of this tiny triangular bar in Williamsburg. It's right under Union Street Station and every five or six minutes the entire bar shakes, so you can't be anywhere but New York.' 394 Broadway; www.cafe-moto.com

RUSS AND DAUGHTERS 'For me, New York comfort food is big, Jewish flavours. I adore the delis of the Lower East Side; I can rarely resist a salt-beef bagel from this place.' 179 East Houston Street; www.russanddaughters.com

GRAMERCY TAVERN 'I come alone, sit at the bar, order a Gibson Martini (made very dry with gin and onions) and inevitably strike up a conversation with the bartender or my neighbours; I leave feeling better about myself and the world.' 42 East 20th Street; www.gramercytavern.com

UPLAND 'I like it here so much that I once went three nights on the trot. It's one of those places where the combination of elements – California-inspired menu, decor, friendly staff, wine list – create something much more than the sum of its parts.' 345 Park Avenue South; www.uplandnyc.com

BUBBY'S 'Any food-lover going to NYC should wander around North Moore Street in TriBeCa where there are fantastic restaurants (Locanda Verde, Nobu) and great little cocktail bars (Smith & Mills). But my favourite is family-run Bubby's; its brunch is so good that it's served 24 hours a day.' 120 Hudson Street; www.bubbys.com

SHOPSIN'S 'Inside foodie jamboree Essex Street Market is this brilliant diner run by Kenny Shopsin, who is one of the most eccentric owners I've ever met. I've sat there for hours eating pancakes, listening to Kenny and his son shout about their family dramas across the kitchen. It's New York theatre at its finest.' 120 Essex Street; www.shopsins.com. ANNA HART

'Spuntino: Comfort Food (New York Style)' by Russell Norman is published by Bloomsbury from 10 September at £25.



MYSTIC RIVER

Few childhoods are as idyllic as Adhara Luz's. Between diving among giant water lilies and playing on white-sand Amazonian beaches, she grew up sailing gin-clear tributaries by houseboat, helping her parents as they introduced Western medical care to communities in the Brazilian jungle. Today, Luz is welcomed into leaders' huts as one of the family and it's this deep connection with the Amazon that inspired her to launch **AMZ Projects**, which crafts eco-conscious trips from emerging hippie hotspot **Alter do Chão**, the rainforest's answer to a Caribbean beach. AMZ's bespoke riverboat adventures combine access to the region's natural beauty and off-the-tourist-trail interaction with the communities that live here to create a sophisticated experience this remote region has long lacked. Now the first wave of trendsetting Paulistas and Cariocas are coming to moor up on a sand bar and paddle-board while the crew shake starfruit Caipirinhas and the chef prepares an organic supper under a starry sky. 'We provide a portal to one of the most incredible places on the planet, yet always prioritise how we contribute to its sustainable evolution,' says Luz. The best time to go is from August to April when the high waters of flood season subside. This year's agenda includes a flying-yoga retreat held in the treetops and an intense journey to the remote Huni Kuin tribes in Acre, as well as New Year's now cult six-day flotilla, uniting Brazil's coolest creatives over Carimbó dance parties, ayahuasca ceremonies, open-air cinema screenings and cultural brainstorming. www.amzprojects.com LAUREN HOLMES



WHO SAYS IT'S A CULTURAL DESERT?

Dubai might not top your average hipster's hit list, but the city has long held the belief that 'if we build it, they will come'. Enter **DUBAI DESIGN DISTRICT** – or **D3**: an attempt to shed the city's malls and Maseratis image by constructing a Shoreditch-style enclave in a vacant sand patch. The Foster + Partners-designed development for galleries and artists' studios might not open until 2017, but already trendy local fashion brands **S*uce** and Nathalie Trad (as seen on Sienna Miller) are moving in. Plus, next month the zone hosts the inaugural Dubai Design Week. But those who like it gritty should look to the more organic artsy area of **AL QUOZ**. For the past 10 years this cluster of warehouses behind the

main Sheikh Zayed Road has been growing an independent scene of galleries, live music and documentary film nights. Later this year Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz's hub, will double in size, with 15 new cultural spaces. Among them is a base for homegrown gallery The Third Line. Also look out for Good Vibes Market, which brings together Dubai's burgeoning food-truck scene. Try smoked meats from Maple Leaf and Mama Tani's twists on Emirati *khameer* breads. But the biggest sign Dubai's going a bit Brooklyn is Al Quoz's A4 Space. The community library hosts pop-up shows for emerging fashion designers and fuels laptop-tapping freelancers with beans from local roasters Raw Coffee. LAURA CHUBB

AL QUOZ

D3

How to spot Dubai's new creative tribes

THE BUSINESS CARD

Graphic designer/guerrilla knitter

Creative director at a global architecture or fashion powerhouse

THE DRINK

Single origin, ethically sourced cold-press coffee

Green juice blended from the finest imported vegetables

MOST LIKELY TO SAY

'There's a documentary about the Palestinian diaspora on at the Jam Jar later, and they're giving out free pizza.'

'Our interior designer has just added a slide between our first and ground floors. So efficient!'



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BLURRED LINES

Bananas bring bad luck and hot dogs can be used as bait – but what else don't you know about fishing?



Hipsters are oft derided for colonising our cities with craft-coffee shops and fixie bikes. But their worthy intentions of preserving artisan skills and embracing nostalgia for a self-sustainable, simple life (as set down in slow-living bibles *Cereal* and *Kinfolk*), are a little harder to mock. The rise of urban farming and foraging (albeit only for cocktail ingredients) all tap into this return-to-our-roots view. And now the counter-culture creatives have turned their attention to yet another traditional pastime: fishing.

In upstate New York – a magnet for Williamsburg's weekenders – the Catskills and Hudson Valley have long been a fly-fishing haven: the rivers, streams and lakes stuffed with every variety of trout, bass and perch. These days the sport is casting off its well-worn waders and appealing to a new crowd thanks to the area's growing line of design-conscious places to stay. One new arrival is the **Spruceton Inn** (doubles from about £90), which has nine rooms decked out with homemade wooden furniture and vintage maps, and the bubbling West Kill creek out back for guests to try their luck with a rod. Over the border on Lake Ontario, **Drake Devonshire** (doubles from about £170), pictured left, arranges fishing trips among a range of other outdoorsy activities (hiking trails, bird spotting), as well as lake-to-table dining for those who don't want to go to the trouble of catching their own.

On the home front, the recently opened **Soho Farmhouse** (doubles from £330) has added angling into its wholesome country mix. And if you're not already hooked, next summer the latest addition to **The Pig's** litter opens in Devon's Otter Valley, transforming what was once the Combe House Hotel with fishing as part of the draw and a boot room full of wellies, which will, of course, come in handy.



ANATOMY OF THE HIPSTER ANGLER

THE ROD: A minimal telescopic number from Tenkara Rod Co (*tenkara* is a method of Japanese fly fishing), which raised its funds on Kickstarter.

THE PACK: A classic No.21 rucksack from slick Scandi brand Fjällräven, preferably in jaunty ochre or red.

THE OUTFIT: Take the Shoreditch look to the Spey by wearing waterproof jackets from old-school outdoor labels such as Hunter with a cable-knit jumper. As for headgear, go for a tight, woollen beanie hat from Finisterre or a traditional, tweed flat cap by Barbour.

THE TROPHY: A selfie with your catch of the day posted on Instagram. #reellife



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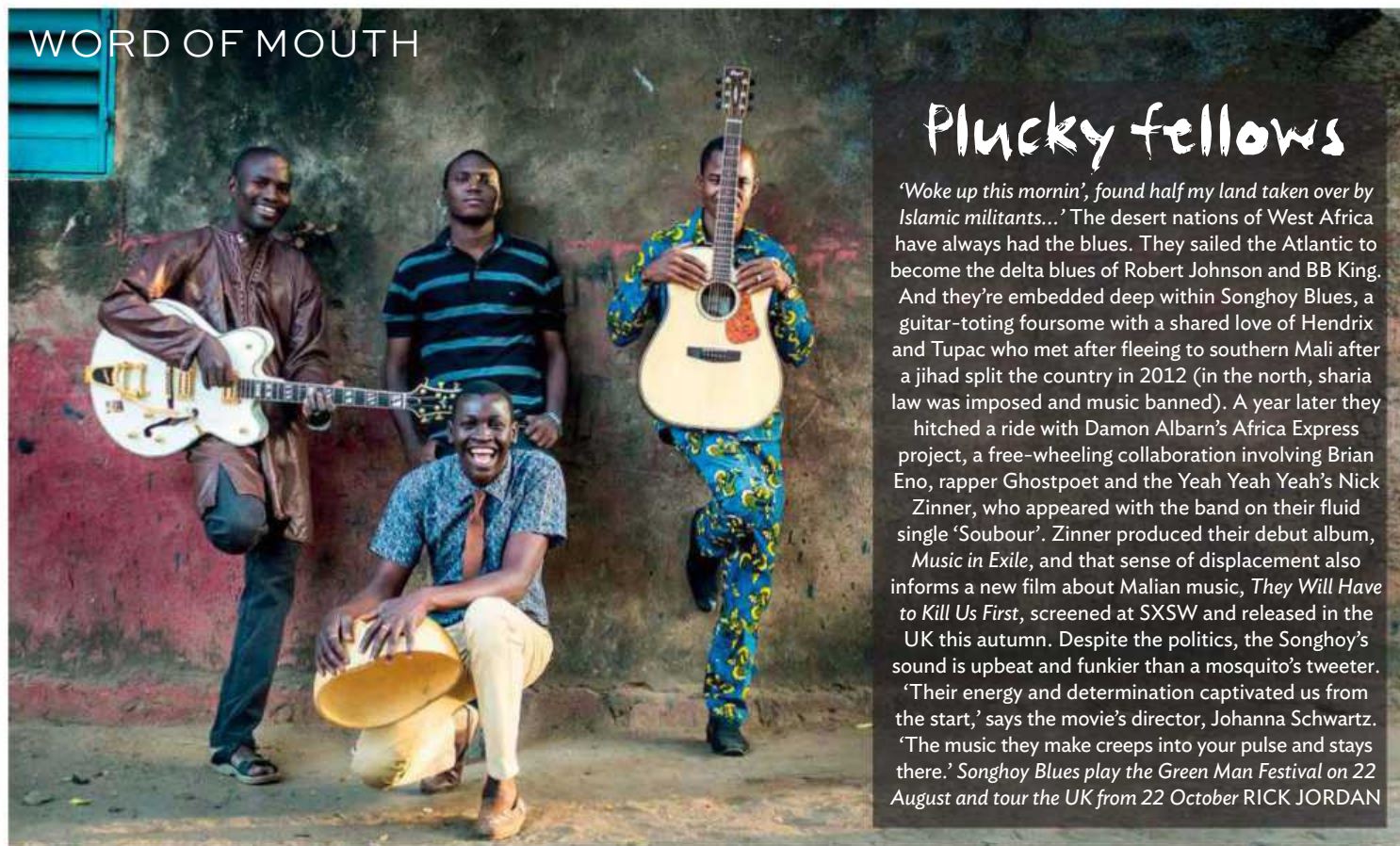
To make a booking, contact your travel consultant, call (00 800) 6488-6488, or visit fourseasons.com/maldives



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Advance reservations are required. Blackout dates may apply. Paradise Twice offer is valid until December 20, 2015. A minimum six-night stay is required – with three nights at Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa and three nights at Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru – to receive complimentary speedboat and seaplane transfers for two. See website for full details.



Plucky fellows

'Woke up this mornin', found half my land taken over by Islamic militants...' The desert nations of West Africa have always had the blues. They sailed the Atlantic to become the delta blues of Robert Johnson and BB King. And they're embedded deep within Songhoy Blues, a guitar-toting foursome with a shared love of Hendrix and Tupac who met after fleeing to southern Mali after a jihad split the country in 2012 (in the north, sharia law was imposed and music banned). A year later they hitched a ride with Damon Albarn's Africa Express project, a free-wheeling collaboration involving Brian Eno, rapper Ghostpoet and the Yeah Yeah Yeah's Nick Zinner, who appeared with the band on their fluid single 'Soubour'. Zinner produced their debut album, *Music in Exile*, and that sense of displacement also informs a new film about Malian music, *They Will Have to Kill Us First*, screened at SXSW and released in the UK this autumn. Despite the politics, the Songhoy's sound is upbeat and funkier than a mosquito's tweeter. 'Their energy and determination captivated us from the start,' says the movie's director, Johanna Schwartz. 'The music they make creeps into your pulse and stays there.' *Songhoy Blues* play the Green Man Festival on 22 August and tour the UK from 22 October RICK JORDAN



ON THE RADAR

GUADALAJARA

The insider whispers about Mexico's rising star have turned to roars of late. A fleet of hot-shot galleries have arrived in the western-Pacific city, including an outpost of Madrid's **Travesía Cuatro** in a gorgeous, Luis Barragán-designed house, alongside established museums such as **MAZ** (Museo de Arte de Zapopan), which showcases thrilling contemporary works from Latin America and elsewhere. Until recently, though, there were no hotels in town cool enough to match them – but now there's the **Demetria**, which has its own art collection, and the 40-room **Casa Fayette**. The latter is the latest from the stylish Habita group, and opens this month in a mid-century mansion reimagined by Milanese architects Dimore Studio. 'Guadalajara is becoming as exciting a

cultural destination as Mexico City,' says Grupo Habita's Rafael Micha. 'In fact, with spaces such as **Curro y Poncho**, known for its innovative installation pieces, it is gaining even more cachet than the capital.' But it's not just the art that is making the city so dynamic: it's also right in the heart of tequila country – go for a tasting at the **400 Conejos** mezcaleria or gritty saloon **Pare de Sufir** – and has a thriving food scene. Architectural showstopper **Hueso**, for example, serves up meaty dishes such as pork belly and marrow in a 1940s landmark building in the modernist Lafayette neighbourhood. Its setting is beautiful if slightly macabre: more than 10,000 painted animal bones are mounted all around the bleached-white interior. ONDINE COHANE

Clockwise from this picture: Travesía Cuatro gallery; works by Mario Gardía Torres and Gabriel Sierra at MAZ; Hueso; Jose Dávila work at MAZ; impression of the new Casa Fayette

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I CAN'T GET NO SLEEP


It kept the British Museum's treasures safe in the war. It has even starred in *Skyfall* and The Prodigy's *Firestarter* video. But despite a rattlingly hectic lifestyle, the London Tube always went to bed on time. Now it's all change. As the round-the-clock weekend service rolls out, Hazel Lubbock timetables a 24-hour hit list


11AM

THE ART OF WINEMAKING

London Cru, the capital's first winery, produces Chardonnay as fine as many from Burgundy. At its winemaking classes, oenophiles can experiment with the levels of tannins, sugar and acid to create their own blend.

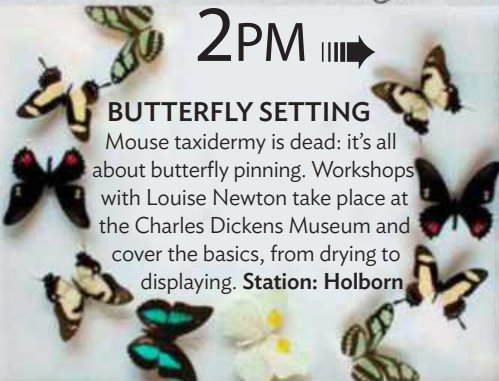

Station: Earl's Court



2PM

BUTTERFLY SETTING

Mouse taxidermy is dead: it's all about butterfly pinning. Workshops with Louise Newton take place at the Charles Dickens Museum and cover the basics, from drying to displaying.

Station: Holborn



11.59PM

MIDNIGHT MATINEE

Moonlight illuminates the stage during a special series of late-night performances at the open-air Globe Theatre. Catch Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* on 11 September then take the first night Tube home.

Station: Southwark



1AM

ROCK 'N' BOWL

Last entry into The O2 in Greenwich is 1am, but the lanes at Brooklyn Bowl are open until the final pin's been knocked down.

Station: North Greenwich

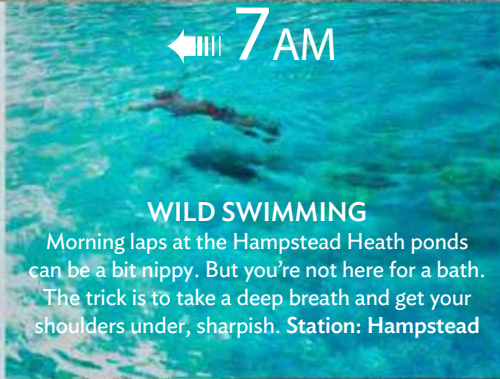


7AM

WILD SWIMMING

Morning laps at the Hampstead Heath ponds can be a bit nippy. But you're not here for a bath. The trick is to take a deep breath and get your shoulders under, sharpish.

Station: Hampstead



4.01PM

CHEEKY AFTERNOON TEA

Mr Fogg's – the imaginary home of Phileas Fogg – is all about monocles, maps and Morning Calls (a rum-based cocktail). Earl Grey-infused gin brews in teapots are served alongside cucumber sandwiches and cake.

Station: Green Park



9PM

OLD-SCHOOL DINNER

Burgers, pizzas and kebabs have all been given the gourmet treatment. Next up is 1970s favourite, chicken Kiev: made with wild garlic and artisan breadcrumbs at new restaurant Coin Laundry.

Station: Farringdon

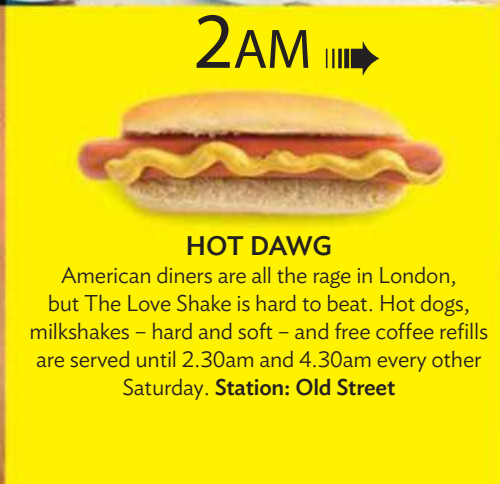


2AM

HOT DAWG

American diners are all the rage in London, but The Love Shake is hard to beat. Hot dogs, milkshakes – hard and soft – and free coffee refills are served until 2.30am and 4.30am every other Saturday.

Station: Old Street

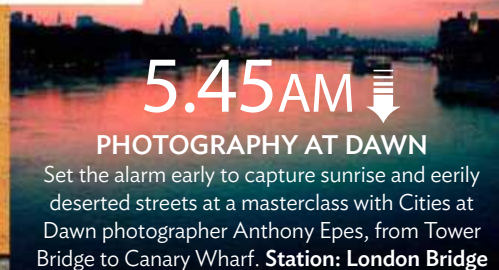


5.45AM

PHOTOGRAPHY AT DAWN

Set the alarm early to capture sunrise and eerily deserted streets at a masterclass with Cities at Dawn photographer Anthony Epes, from Tower Bridge to Canary Wharf.

Station: London Bridge

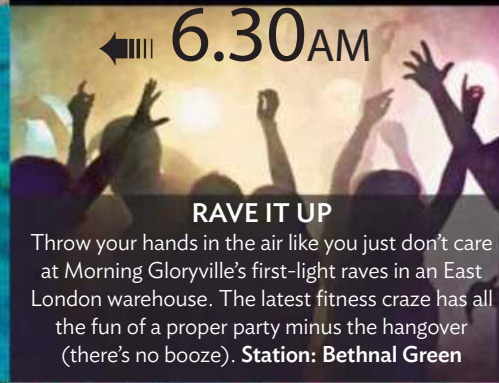


6.30AM

RAVE IT UP

Throw your hands in the air like you just don't care at Morning Gloryville's first-light raves in an East London warehouse. The latest fitness craze has all the fun of a proper party minus the hangover (there's no booze).

Station: Bethnal Green

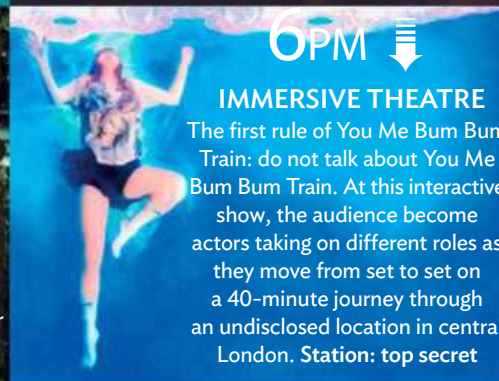


6PM

IMMERSIVE THEATRE

The first rule of You Me Bum Bum Train: do not talk about You Me Bum Bum Train. At this interactive show, the audience become actors taking on different roles as they move from set to set on a 40-minute journey through an undisclosed location in central London.

Station: top secret



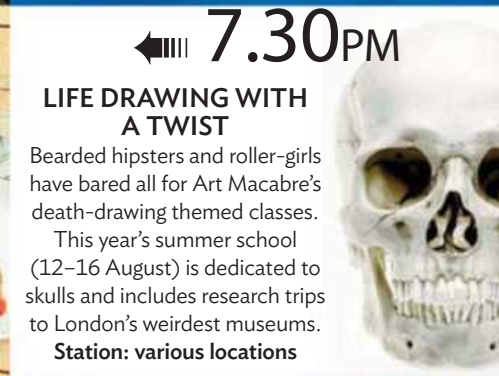
7.30PM

LIFE DRAWING WITH A TWIST

Bearded hipsters and roller-girls have bared all for Art Macabre's death-drawing themed classes.

This year's summer school (12–16 August) is dedicated to skulls and includes research trips to London's weirdest museums.

Station: various locations



4AM

COCKTAILS WITH A VIEW

At sky-high Duck and Waffle, classic cocktails are almost unrecognisable, with crazy flavour infusions such as bone marrow and blue cheese. It's open 24/7 so why not stay up and see sunrise from the 40th floor?

Station: Liverpool Street



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FREEZE FRAME

Edge-of-the-seat epics zoom in on the world's highest peak

Mount Everest has been a source of fascination for generations. This month's *Everest* is the latest film to depict its often-perilous allure. Starring Josh Brolin and Jake Gyllenhaal, its release seems all the more poignant following the Nepalese earthquake in April. The movie is inspired by another catastrophe, on 10 May 1996, when the mountain was hit by a fierce storm, resulting in the largest loss of life on the slopes in one day. It tells the story of two of the four expeditions tackling the summit, led by Scott Fischer (Gyllenhaal) and Rob Hall (Jason Clarke). Most of the filming took place in the Alps but some scenes were shot in the Himalayas. This was not without its own drama, as an avalanche struck nearby when the crew were at base camp. Texan doctor Beck Weathers, part of Hall's group and played by Brolin, is among the climbers who published accounts of the 1996 disaster. He was at 26,000ft when the storm struck. 'You are plunged into darkness with temperatures plummeting to -30°C in minutes,' says Weathers. After spending the night outside, he made it back to Camp 4 in the morning but fell into a hypothermic coma. He subsequently defied all expectations by waking up and getting off the mountain, although he later lost his nose and an arm to frostbite. 'For all the human stories,' he says, 'in the end, the lead actor is Mount Everest.'

AOIFE O'RIORDAIN *'Everest' is out on 18 September.*
'Left for Dead: My Journey Home from Everest' by Beck Weathers is published on 3 September (Sphere, £8.99)



THE TRENDS TAKING OFF AND THOSE RUNNING OUT OF FUEL

✈ ARRIVALS ↑

COLD-BREW TEA

A hip sip made by adding tea leaves to water and refrigerating overnight. The new cold-brew coffee, which was the new single-origin flat white. Do keep up.

FORAGED FRAGRANCES

The scent world goes locavore. See GPS perfumes at Margate's Haeckels, made from Kent seaweed, and hike-harvested goodies at California's Juniper Ridge.

LOS CABOS

Hollywood's top getaway is bouncing back post Hurricane Odile, with reopened classics (Esperanza, One&Only) and a slick newbie (The Cape by Thompson).

✈ DEPARTURES ↓

MILE-HIGH TIPPLES

Between Moss-gate (cracking into her duty-free stash on an Easyjet flight) and Scandinavian Airlines' three-drink limit, cocktails in the clouds are at risk.

LOST WEEKENDS

Cool holistic happenings include American export Wanderlust, which mixes outdoor yoga with top acts like Moby, and retreat/festival Restival in the Sahara.

CIRCULAR BEACH TOWELS

A thing in Australia thanks to homegrown brand The Beach People. But surely regular rectangular ones are just more *body-shaped*?



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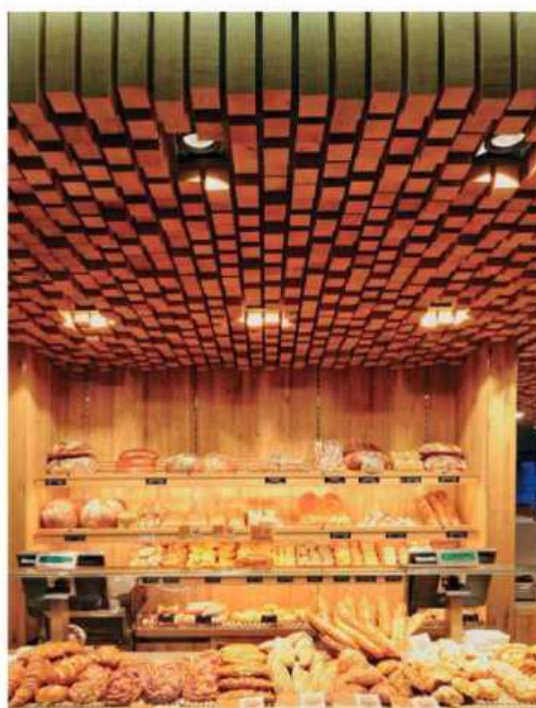


Prices are per person based on twin share, subject to availability & valid for selected October departures.



WOOD

It can be stronger than steel and is now being used to build skyscrapers. But however this living material is reimagined it always keeps its organic groove



PHOTOGRAPHS: ARCHITECTURSTUDIO-FISCHER; VALERIE DRAY/HANSLUCAS.COM; MATTHEW MILLMAN; MIKE MORAN; MATTHIEU SALVAING; LI XIAODONG

Top row, from left: intricate Japanese carpentry juxtaposes against concrete walls at Nozomi Sushi Bar in **Valencia**; at Fellah Hotel in **Marrakech** mid-century finds are mixed with traditional materials and crafts; local architect Isay Weinfeld created two symmetrical wings in freijo wood to house the cubic suites of the Fasano Boa Vista hotel in **Brazil**; the use of reclaimed wood goes well with the seasonal, sustainable menu at **San Francisco**'s Bar Agricole; **Aspen** Art Museum's canopied rooftop is home to a sculpture garden set against a backdrop of the Ajax Mountain.

Middle row, from left: in the German town of **Steinenbronn**, wooden window surrounds double as seating at Treiber café-bakery; Shigeru Ban Architect's Aspen Art Museum is wrapped in a giant lattice structure; a wall decked in salvaged planks adds warmth to the Scandi lines of Claus Meyer's Radio restaurant in **Copenhagen**; Korean artist Jae-Hyo Lee's seven chestnut spheres sit in the reception of the Crown Metropal in **Melbourne**; at the **Böbingen** branch of Treiber, lengths of wood ripple above the freshly baked bread.

Bottom row, from left: Liyuan Library on the outskirts of **Beijing** is covered in a shell of firewood to blend into the surrounding forested landscape; herringbone-clad Father Coffee in **Johannesburg** has an in-house roastery to fine-tune its fruity signature blend; at Citizen M **Rotterdam** a helical staircase takes guests up to the touch-screen check-in terminals; in **Paris**'s hip SoPi district, Le Dépanneur serves organic burgers and tequila cocktails in a Cali-desert-style space; the bathtub in the master suite at **Uruguay**'s Estancia Vik was carved from jacaranda trees. FIONA KERR





SOMEWHERE FOR THE WEEKEND?

WARSAW

The one-time Eastern Bloc city has a bad rap for being painfully serious. But with Poland's only comedy club and Europe's biggest neon collection, the renegade capital is now answering back

By Timothy O'Grady

THE FIRST TIME I visited this city I had an aversion to it. I saw a grey place of ostentatiously wide avenues. It was tired and pitilessly grim. The buildings always seemed far away, as if they stepped back when you approached them. There were huge blocks of flats, displays of Stalinist self-aggrandisement, a feeling of the citizen being miniaturised. I live north of Warsaw, in Torun, a medieval walled town of cobbled squares and mysterious lanes, where Copernicus was born. There you could feel intimacy, beauty, a depth of time. Warsaw, by contrast, seemed designed to remind you that you were in an endless purgatory.

Then in the spring of this year, with a little help, I saw it with new eyes.

Is there a European city of modern times that suffered such destruction as Warsaw? By the end of World War II 85 per cent of it had been obliterated. It was a *tabula rasa*. Its resurrection began immediately afterwards. The Old Town was meticulously reconstructed, in large part by volunteers, using as guides the 18th-century paintings of Canaletto, who worked for the Polish king. The Soviet administration supervised much of the rest, filling Le Corbusier-inspired blocks with people from the

countryside. Towering over it was the Palace of Culture and Science, a kind of squat, burly Empire State Building, bestowed on the city by Stalin himself, who was at the same time emptying the country of its produce and shipping it to Russia.

The Soviet hand lay on Warsaw long and heavy. It slowly asphyxiated Poland and her capital, incapacitating

THERE'S A SENSE OF CONFIDENCE. WHAT WAS MONOCHROME HAS GAINED MORE OF THE SPECTRUM

style, commerce, artistic experiment and *joie de vivre*. But then came the pro-democracy movement Solidarity and more recently, especially for Warsaw, money. The margins of disposable income are wider here than elsewhere in Poland. Young people arrive in search of lucrative work and the freedom to be had in a capital city. What was monochrome has gained more of the spectrum. There is confidence, gregariousness and a sense of release. You find dazzling menus, extraordinary shoes and improbable revivals. The ages of the place, both physically present and imagined, are

there to be invoked, sometimes solemnly, more often with a light touch.

The ironies are not lost on Warsawians. The Communist party headquarters for a while housed the stock exchange and now has banks. Monika Jaruzelska, daughter of General Jaruzelski, who imposed martial law during the time of Solidarity, displays her stylish fashion line in an abandoned motorcycle factory. The old milk bars, cheap Communist-era eating houses, are back in fashion, as is the furniture of this period. There are wittily designed new hotels, including **Sen Pszczoly** (doubles from about £35), **H15 Boutique** (doubles from about £100) and **Hotel Rialto** (doubles from about £120).

Warsaw's restaurant scene too is being resurrected by young Polish chefs who have travelled the world and come home. **Atelier Amaro**, with Poland's first Michelin star and a two-month waiting list, is a reference point for conversations about fine food in the city. **Solec 44** is a comedy and a delight – there are stacks of board games, a piano for inspired guests, a string of coloured lights and unassuming tables in what looks like a 1950s railway-parts store. Chef Aleksander Baron started as a dishwasher in Edinburgh and is now on a scholarly hunt for centuries-old Polish recipes. He served ➤



From left: Serwus restaurant; smoked panna cotta with red-cabbage purée at Solec 44; design shop Soho Factory. Previous page, Ania Kuczyńska boutique

► me an amazingly varied and delicious plate of fermented pumpkin, beet and brussels sprouts with new-potato vodka, then wild-boar bacon with Jerusalem artichokes (boars eat them) and roasted pear, and finally a liqueur with plum seeds. It was clever, unpretentious and entertaining. As I was leaving after midnight, the Polish R&B singer Natalia Przybyś was just arriving with a large group to celebrate a hit record.

There is an irrepressibility to all these transformations. It is like a vast canvas on which a continually evolving postmodern referencing experiment is being composed.

You can take in many of the city's greatest hits by walking the Royal Route, starting in Łazienki Park and ending in the Old Town. It's long but worth it. Łazienki is grand, old world, once the king's summer residence. On a Sunday in summer you can hear a free Chopin recital at noon, have lunch on the lawn or on your own indoor balcony in a court orangery and join the promenaders in front of the Palace on the Water. Aleje Ujazdowskie will take you past the Prime Minister's office and Botanical Gardens on to Three Crosses Square; but you could detour left into Plac Zbawiciela, with its rainbow arch (taken down by advocates of intolerance but immediately put back up again) and its lovely cafés such as **Charlotte**. Mokotowska Street leads back to the Royal Route at Three

Crosses Square via some of the finer pre-war bourgeois residences and contemporary boutiques, including **Ania Kuczyńska, Designer Secret, She/s a Riot** and **Wake Up the Bear**.

Straight ahead, rising like a fanfare of trumpets, is a glimpse of Soviet Warsaw, the wide cross street of Aleje

OUT OF ABJECT MATERIALS LEFT BY GERMANS AND RUSSIANS WITTY THINGS ARE BEING MADE

Jerozolimskie, the House of the Party and, away to the left, the central railway station and the Palace of Culture. At this intersection is a striding General de Gaulle on a plinth, and there is a 15-metre-high plastic palm tree made by Joanna Rajdowska to remind you of the city's Jews – and the fact that you are on Jerusalem Avenue.

Just beyond is Nowy Świat street and a surrounding district abounding in shops, restaurants, bars and clubs. The most interesting drinking dens are known as *pawilony*, which can be found in almost any courtyard off Nowy Świat. They are tiny and individualistic, reminiscent of the Golden Gai in Tokyo. Take in the aromas of breads and cakes at **Café Vincent**. Away to the right, at

Dobra 31, is the splendid and magical **Czuly Barbarzyńca**, a bookshop with a café and a swing whose name means 'tender barbarian'. Nowy Świat then becomes Krakowskie Przedmieście, off which are the Copernicus Science Centre, the University of Warsaw (look out over the city or down through the skylight at labouring students from the roof of the pink-doored library) and the **Hotel Bristol** (doubles from about £145), Warsaw's Savoy. Next is the Presidential Palace, and, at last, Plac Zamkowy and the Royal Castle, built in the 17th century, reconstructed in 1970, with two Rembrandts in its museum.

In the Old Town square is one of the many representations of Warsaw's mermaid, the city's guardian and symbol. There was another drawn by Picasso on an apartment-block wall with a hammer in her fist, but residents, exhausted by intruders wishing to see the image, painted over it. Everything here is a replica, a reconstruction, and this can induce a sense of hollowness – but also a sense of the passion that willed a whole city back into being.

Across the river are other worlds, seldom visited by outsiders. The Praga district alone is worth the trip – once dangerous, now picturesquely decrepit and creatively vibrant. But there is also Saska Kępa, and the Skaryszewska Park, just beyond the new National



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From left: the Museum of Modern Art in the centre of the city; the neon museum at the Soho Factory; the lobby of H15 Boutique hotel

Stadium, built for Euro 2012, with Henryk Kuna's mysterious sculpture, *The Rhythm*, of a woman sensing music. At **Café Misianka**, formerly a public toilet, are some of Warsaw's best cakes. Or you can just walk among the birds and beaches of the wild Right Bank. Visiting Japanese architects, startled by such botanical exuberance across the river from the massed concrete, supposedly inquired as to who designed the greenery here.

North of the park, on Minska Street, is the **Soho Factory**, a post-industrial site where there are now new flats, design shops, a film studio and a museum

devoted to neon signs. Here too is Mateusz Gessler's wonderful 24-hour restaurant **Warsaw Wschodnia**, which dishes up a very smart three-course lunch, cooked before your eyes, for about £3.60. Back outside the gates of this complex are the murals on Minska Street and the small, somewhat tongue-in-cheek Czar PRL museum, buried in a disused lens factory, which evokes the life of a Soviet-era Polish citizen through old hairdryers, propaganda posters and hundreds of other objects. This is a stop on Adventure Warsaw, an alternative city tour run by articulate young enthusiasts driving Nysa vans.

The borders of Poland have dilated and constricted according to the appetites and capacities of its neighbours to the west and east. Sometimes it has ceased to exist. It is a long story of tragedy, romance and annihilation. Nowhere else in the country is the drama and complexity of this past so tangible as it is in Warsaw. It is a past which haunts and beguiles, but which also generates a drive to transcend and reinvent. Out of such abject materials as were bequeathed by Germans and Russians bold and witty things are being made. Warsaw has a feeling of newness, of a rising up, of an innocence that doesn't lack shrewdness. 

THE INSIDETRACK



Agata Kabza came to Warsaw because she was following her heart – and then she fell in love all over again

'I was living in Krakow, where people have an almost obligatory antipathy to Warsaw. But when my fiancé came here to work, I co-founded a tour company, Spark, in order to overcome my resistance to the city. I found that you can turn into a Warsovian quickly:

in Krakow the same process takes several generations. Warsaw is a young town with an old heart. You feel the beauty that was lost, the war and the uprising. But it is full of newcomers, young people who come to start afresh. It's big and fast, but it's also very open. If you want to play the bongos in a church, you'll find other people to do it with. As a guide, I spend a lot of my time taking visitors around the Old Town, but I also like them to see out-of-the-way places such as **Zoliborz**. A group of neighbours there decided they'd like to make each other breakfast and it grew into something

bigger; now in a school at the end of Wojska Polskiego there are stalls with juices, honey, meats and slow food from all over the world. Not too far away, at Burakowska 5/7, there's an old lace factory covered with vines and full of elegant shops, a fromagerie and a wonderful Italian deli **Mielżyński**. There's a little spot behind the castle called **Góra Gnojna**, entered from Jezuicka Street, where long ago people buried themselves in manure in the hope of being cured of syphilis. I like to stand on the terrace there and look out at the river.' www.poland-incoming.eu



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Images: left - Ritz Carlton Abama, Tenerife; right - Princesa Yaiza Suite Hotel Resort, Lanzarote



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WHERE TO STAY

Chengdu Spain Kent + Brandon Flowers

EDITED BY PETER BROWNE

EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW

ROCK THE HOUSE

The Chinese city of Chengdu is a patchwork of ancient and modern. It makes two-thirds of the world's iPads and is home to the oldest school. Now a game-changing new hotel fuses out-there design with dynasties of tradition. By Dominic Lutyens

WHERE TO STAY



IF BEIJING IS CHINA'S POLITICAL CENTRE, CHENGDU IS ITS MOST

I HAD NO PRECONCEPTIONS about Chengdu, the capital of China's south-western province of Sichuan, before I visited last month. After all, it's still relatively unknown in the UK, except perhaps for its panda reserves and uncompromisingly hot but delicious Sichuan cuisine. Its arrival as an international city began in earnest five years ago when the Chinese government lured 260 of the Fortune 500 companies – mainly in the IT, media and fashion sectors – to set up headquarters here, using tempting inducements such as lucrative tax breaks. Now China's fourth city – after Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou – it is changing rapidly. If Beijing is China's political centre and cultural hub, Chengdu is definitely the country's most vibrant metropolis, and with a more laid-back lifestyle to boot.

In fact, Chengdu has always been reasonably prosperous, thanks to Sichuan's prodigiously fertile countryside, hence the province's nickname, Land of Abundance. I got to experience this on a visit to Mount Qingcheng, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where, once upon a time, Chinese Taoism was founded. The road here is lined with orchards; the temples ascending the mountain almost hidden from view

by gloriously verdant forest. It is an extraordinarily beautiful part of the world.

But in the city of Chengdu, such bounty and prosperity isn't always immediately obvious. Many of its buildings – mainly grey, high-rise apartment blocks – are in poor condition, scarcely flattered by the famously lugubrious, hazy light, since the city sits on a plateau east of Tibet and is surrounded by trapped mists. But it's a thrilling place. Scores of people mill about its broad avenues and narrow alleys or zip around on electric mopeds. Jinli street, a seemingly endless market, gave me an instant infusion of the old-school trades and artistry. Here, there are men who remove ear wax (something I happily succumbed to, despite their gigantic, menacing metal tweezers) and stalls selling microscopically detailed crafts: paper cut-out cards with filigree-like designs; molten sugar moulded in moments into tiny 3D animals. At one food stall I was amazed to find a man tossing a single 20-metre-long noodle into a pot of boiling water to form perfect loops.

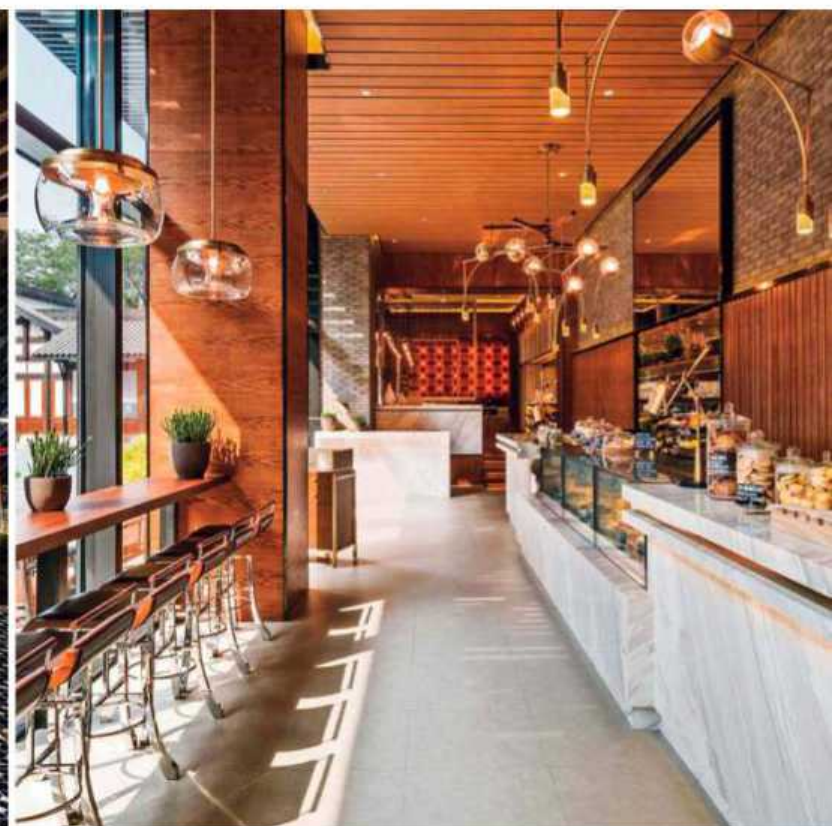
There is evidence that some of Chengdu's 14 million inhabitants are becoming more affluent and Westernised. At the swanky new shopping centre Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li hipsters scope

out boutiques such as Marimekko and Marni and hang out in the biggest Muji megastore outside Tokyo. At Jinli street and Kuan Zhai alley, a network of lanes and courtyards renovated in the 1990s, there are buzzy restaurants and shops to rival the best in Beijing.

Yet Chengdu still values its traditional culture: its many lush parks are filled with long-established teahouses where the famously easy-going population languidly play mahjong over jasmine tea – no wonder the indolent panda, which does little more than eat and sleep, is idolised here – or pray in hushed Taoist temples.

ONE STRIKING MARK of the city's recent modernisation is the arrival of The Temple House, owned by the UK's Swire Hotels. It is one of its adventurously contemporary House Collective properties, which goes some way to explaining its maverick quality. (The word House was chosen to suggest a home with a strong emphasis on design; Collective to highlight a collaborative approach.)

The first was The Opposite House in Beijing, which opened in 2008. There the highly conceptual, colourful design by Kengo Kuma includes a grass-green glass façade and an experimental interior that plays



VIBRANT METROPOLIS, WITH A MORE LAID-BACK LIFESTYLE TO BOOT

with visually ambiguous surfaces such as high-gloss finishes and ethereal, gauzy fabrics, all to intriguingly disorientating effect. The second was Hong Kong's The Upper House, which opened in 2009 in a 50-floor tower. Designed by André Fu, it pioneered the use of in-room technology: room service is ordered on an iPod Touch and motion sensors ensure housekeeping never disturbs guests.

The new Temple House is the creation of London-based architects Make, a practice founded by Ken Shuttleworth, formerly of Foster + Partners. In contrast to Chengdu's grey blocks, its L-shaped towers are mid-rise and partly made of bricks, some perforated with random patterns that cleverly draw light inside, in an unusual smoky grey-brown.

The building takes inspiration from its location in an oblique, abstract way. Since 200bc, Chengdu has been famous for its fabrics and embroidery, and is known as Brocade City. In light of this, says Katy Ghahremani, Make's company director, the architects used 'themes of


weaving and stitching throughout'. Those perforated brick walls are one example; elsewhere, there's the lobby's hand-woven lampshades and a bulbous reception desk made from basket-like brass filaments.

A more general reference to the hotel's context is its use of bamboo, a material not specific to Chengdu but a catch-all signifier for China as the food voraciously gnawed by pandas and wood used for much of the furniture.

But far more dramatic is the building's extraordinary meshing of ancient and contemporary architecture. Can there be any other hotel entered via an ornate 100-year-old building leading into a high-walled courtyard with carved wooden walls and minimalist, rectangular reed beds? Beyond this is the lobby. From here, you step outdoors into an area partly landscaped with glass-topped, grassy hillocks that bring light into a subterranean level containing a swimming pool, gym and, surprisingly, an Italian restaurant called Tivano. The owners reason that Italian food is appropriate since Marco Polo's introduction of Chinese noodles to his homeland led to the invention of pasta.

Like the hotel's Temple Café and nearby Jing bar, the restaurant was designed by another company, Avroko, and all three

ramp up the glamour with mid-century, luxe interiors and furniture, typified by caramel leather banquettes, Fifties-style counters and bars and cosy, brass lighting.

By contrast, the bedrooms are airy, clean-lined, pared-down. Armchairs in dark wood are upholstered in oyster-pale, crunchy linen, which immediately reminded me of Christian Liaigre, the French interior designer enamoured of Far Eastern interiors. A latticework wooden screen with echoes of the walls in the entrance courtyard is all that separates the bed from the bathroom. But then this subtle peekaboo approach of layering, of teasingly semi-transparent surfaces – in tandem with the idiosyncratic but harmonious dovetailing of old and new – is a big part of The Temple House's appeal. It doesn't assault you with a brash wow factor but lets subtle ideas percolate gradually. In relatively unrushed Chengdu, this seems all the more appropriate. 

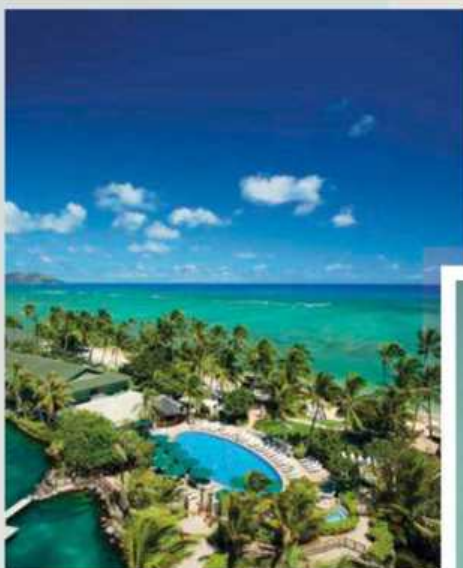
Above, from left to right: the entrance to The Temple House in Chengdu, behind a 100-year-old building; the hotel's pool; the bar in Tivano restaurant; the Temple Café. Previous page, the hotel courtyard

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BED-HOPPING WITH BRANDON FLOWERS

The Killers frontman who once worked as a bellboy at a Vegas hotel talks to Francesca Babb

**'IF ELTON JOHN SAYS
A PLACE IS GOING
TO BE GOOD, IT'S
FAIR TO ASSUME IT'S
GOING TO BE GOOD'**



THE KAHALA, HAWAII

'I got tipped off about this hotel by Elton John. Over the years I've stayed at some luxury places that are nice but too buttoned-up. The Kahala has it all but without the arrogance. I grew up in Las Vegas and a lot of my family – me included – have been involved in the service industry. So I love it when you can tell it matters to the people working in hotels and restaurants.' www.kahalaresort.com. Doubles from about £250



THE SOHO HOTEL, LONDON

'This is a London staple for me and The Killers. It has genuinely become a second home. There's a basement theatre unlike anything I've ever encountered at another hotel. What do you feel like? *Back to the Future?* *There Will Be Blood?* *Harry Potter?* The honesty bar is the go-to, late-night hangout. Up the street there's an Italian joint called Princi with the greatest cannoncini.' www.firmdalehotels.com. Doubles from £355



SUNSET MARQUIS, LOS ANGELES

'I know what you're thinking – big surprise! Everybody who's been in a band stays here. You're right. It is the quintessential rock 'n' roll hotel. But unlike others, it's maintained its classic Hollywood appeal. I have great reverence for the place. I love staying in the villas. I love running into Billy Gibbons in Bar 1200.' www.sunsetmarquis.com. Doubles from about £235



CASTELLO DI CASOLE, TUSCANY

'I first stayed here in the summer of 2013. It's like being teleported into one of Clark Griswold's European fantasies (although you'll have to bring your own Christie Brinkley). You can ride a mountain bike to the little town of Casole d'Elsa. There's something brilliant in every direction, always accompanied by the sound of mandolins. I am not joking.' www.castellodicasole.com. Doubles from about £235



CALISTOGA RANCH, NAPA VALLEY

'You know how you see a picture of a hamburger in a fast-food ad, then you go and get the actual thing and it looks sad and deflated? I had seen photos of this place long before I went and couldn't believe it would ever live up to my expectations. But it did. I took my family on a road trip to northern California and this ranch was the highlight. I'm a sucker for outdoor showers and night hiking.' www.calistogaranch.com. Doubles from about £545

Brandon Flowers' new album, *The Desired Effect*, is out now



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WHERE TO STAY

STYLISH NEW HOTELS IN

SPAIN





GROWN-UP GLOBETROTTER

HOTEL BRUMMELL, BARCELONA

UNDER
£150

This confident addition to the city's hotel scene in the up-and-coming Poble Sec neighbourhood is completely sophisticated without being stiff; comfortably carrying influences from all over the world while making them its own. There are 20 rooms and two fabulous penthouse suites – one overlooking the parkland of Montjuïc, the other taking in the whole of Barcelona – all designed by Crick King and Tommy Tang (masterminds of the Federal Café chain) who describe their sleekly eclectic style as 'tropical modernism' inspired by Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. A metal staircase that zig-zags down one wall looks thoroughly East Village New York, but the cobbled courtyard feels more Marrakech-meets-El Born. The pale-blue rooftop pool, surrounded by Norwegian sun beds, has a Scandinavian, minimalist vibe while antique wooden artefacts and plants from Sri Lanka lend the place a certain calm. At its heart is The Box Social restaurant, run by Australian chef Damien Bolger, who has cultivated his own vegetable patch on the roof. His breakfast bento boxes, flower-strewn salads and wine selection are well worth travelling for, as is a powerful Negroni in the sunny bar across the courtyard. You can always sweat it out the next morning in the adjacent yoga studio and make friends with the neighbours: this place has already fitted right into the community. +34 931 258622; www.hotelbrummell.com.

Doubles from about £90 TARA STEVENS



FRESH-FACED FOODIE

HOSTAL EMPURIES, COSTA BRAVA

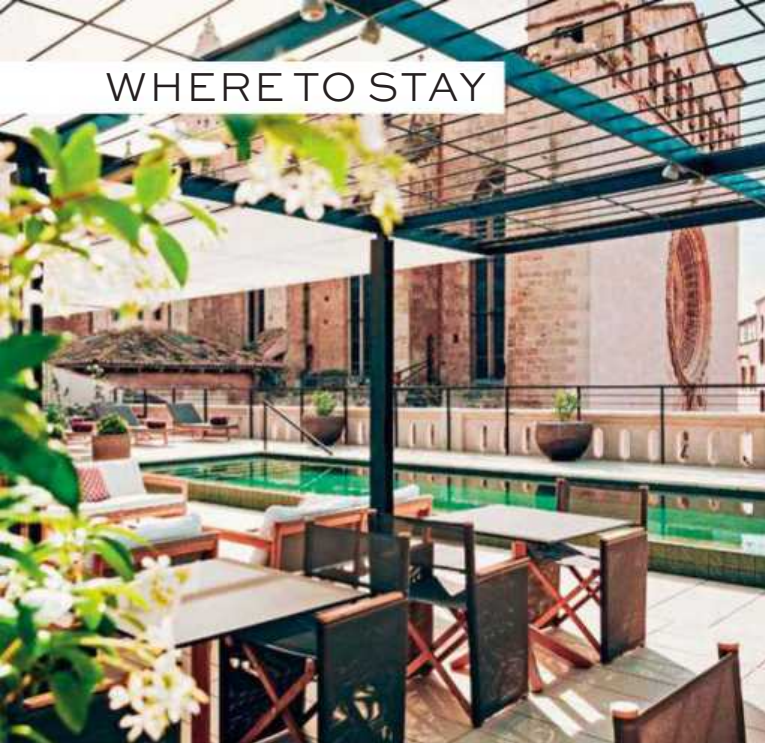
UNDER
£150

As the only hotel in Europe with Gold LEED (leaders in energy and environmental design) status, this recently relaunched seaside retreat has a lot to live up to, but fortunately it's a natural.

Set on one of the Costa Brava's most beautiful and unspoilt coves – an arc of golden sand with views across the Bay of Roses to Spain's most easterly point where there are breathtaking sunrises – it fuses wonderfully with its surroundings. Originally established in 1914 as a simple beach restaurant for architects working on the museum of the ancient Roman town next door, it opened as a hotel in 1919 and over the decades has spread discreetly across the dunes and through the umbrella-pine forest. The revamp by designer Pilar Libano, finished earlier this year, has seen the addition of lovely new suites, set slightly apart from the rest of the property as soothing, holistic spaces with garden terraces and bamboo floors. In their new guise, the grounds are thick with wild flowers, heavily scented herbs and noisy birdlife.

Regulars who've been coming to the hotel over the years may still prefer to crash in the old house, which has smaller bedrooms but the finest Mediterranean views. And while the place may now have a spa with Ayurvedic treatments and heated indoor pools, which use recycled water from its own spring, the food is the main reason many people come here. In an inspired collaboration, two of the Costa Brava's most innovative chefs, Rafa Peña and Biel Gavalda, work wonders with local and organic produce, fish and seafood from the market in Palamós, all paired with some of Spain's finest natural wines. +34 972 770207; www.hostalempuries.com. Doubles from about £75 TS

WHERE TO STAY



SMALL-SCALE BIG HITTER

SANT FRANCESC SINGULAR, PALMA DE MALLORCA

This 19th-century manor house on a square in Palma's Old Town was built to impress, outdoing its more modest neighbours by a mile. Owned by the same clan for over a century, it lay abandoned for a generation until a new proprietor, Andrés Soldevila Ferrer (whose family owns Barcelona's Hotel Majestic), came along with €1.5 million to pump life back into it. Hats off to him. The restoration is brilliant. The central courtyard where steeds were once saddled is now a seating area in which to sip cold Mojitos on hot evenings beneath cloud-scudding skies; the former stables have been converted into an elegant restaurant which serves

Mediterranean sea bass and artichokes sautéed with (get this) hollandaise foam and lemon air. Yes, it's smart and accomplished, but there isn't a whiff of pretentiousness and your companions around the rooftop pool are as likely to be German ladies in pearls as young men with tattoos in neatly pressed shorts. The 42 guestrooms are attired in floppy linens in tasteful oatmeal and hung with original artworks chosen by the owner's interior designer mother. Diminutive Palma really has it all: imposing architecture, shady squares, a revitalised waterfront and a hip tapas scene. Now it has the impeccable little hotel it has always deserved. +34 971 495000; www.hotelsantfrancesc.com. Doubles from about £205 PETER BROWNE

FUN-LOVING SHOWSTOPPER

COTTON HOUSE, BARCELONA

UNDER
£150

There can't be many hotels that house a parlour lined with gleaming walnut cabinets where you can order a set of candy-coloured, hand-stitched shirts, but that's all part of the charm at this new Marriott Autograph property, set in an elegant mansion on the city's Gran Vía. It's a fabulously ostentatious spot, dripping with original Belle Époque features such as the cotton-flower-shaped chandelier above a sweeping marble staircase that rises to the first-floor reception rooms, where there are 19th-century parquet floors worn glossy with age and carved wooden ceilings inset with cherubic friezes. With all this grandeur it could have ended up feeling a bit formal, but designer Lázaro Rosa-Violán has lavished his customary irreverent touches on the place: a pair of power-blue leather armchairs in the library to match a marble-toned Moroccan rug; chintzy cushions scattered along a bench; floor-to-ceiling windows to draw in sun beams from the hotel's *patio de manzana*. Although this traditional light-giving space has been vamped up with decking and banana palms, the smart apartments that surround it give a real sense of having landed in the bosom of the *beau monde*. Here, a dirty Martini is a perfect sharpener to a light lunch, before a snooze by the pool or under the high-thread-count sheets in your coolly minimalist room.

+34 934 505045; www.hotelcottonhouse.com. Doubles from about £145 TS



MODERN CLASSIC IN THE CAPITAL

THE PRINCIPAL MADRID

This significant new arrival might be right on a corner of the Spanish capital's arterial Gran Vía, but with its discreet entrance down a side street, it still feels a bit secret. It's a topsy-turvy place with check-in on the sixth floor in the brilliantly curvaceous, open-plan reception-restaurant-bar Atico. This is a space made for lingering: decorated in rich charcoal, coral and forest green, with velvet curtains, wingback chairs, a marble fireplace and bookcases loaded with leather-bound tomes. Off to one side, there's a small balcony dotted with olive trees beneath which to eat *churros* for breakfast. On the other, there's a pergola-covered terrace for lunch and dinner, where the menu swings from the creative (upside-down red-tuna pizza) to the classic (perfect ham croquettes). It's overseen by innovative chef Ramón Freixa, whose restaurant at The Principal's sister Hotel Unico has two Michelin stars. The 76 bedrooms below this sociable scene have Jackson Pollock-esque artworks clustered above the beds and a palette of moody greys. Gin's the thing at the bar (as it is across the whole city right now): goldfish bowls of the stuff, tinkling with ice and splashed with tonic, preferably drunk at the rooftop Terrazza, with views stretching north over boutique-packed Chueca and south towards the Prado. This is the first really smart hotel to open slap-bang in Madrid's tourist hub in ages, and without a tour group in sight. +34 915 218743; www.theprincipalmadridhotel.com. Doubles from about £165 FIONA KERR



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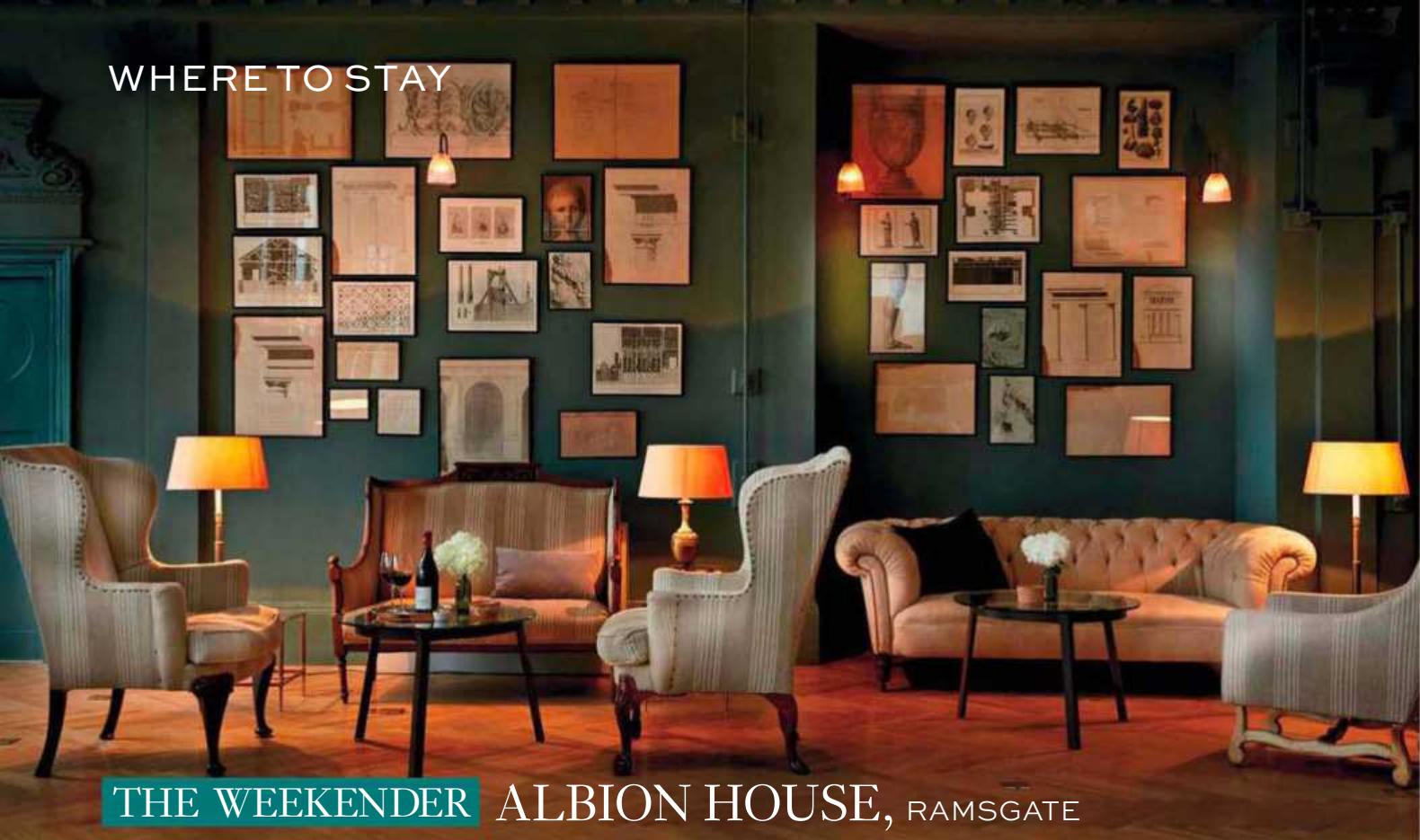
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WHERE TO STAY



THE WEEKENDER ALBION HOUSE, RAMSGATE

WHAT IS IT? An imposing Regency townhouse set high on East Cliff above the Royal Harbour. It was used by the council as offices for decades, then thirty-something couple Ben and Emma Irvine spotted it in 2010 as an empty shell and applied for a grant to restore it as a hotel. The result is Ramsgate's smartest place to stay and the most striking indicator yet that this seaside town is on the up after years in the doldrums.

BEHIND THE SCENES When Mary Townley, an architect and socialite, owned the house in the first half of the 19th century, Princess Victoria stayed for six months to recover from what was thought to be typhoid. Her donkeys came too and were kept in a pleasure garden nearby. The Irvines have kept some quirky details: the former mayor's chamber is now the Town Bar and his long desk, with nickel-plated sliding inkwells intact, has been recycled as the bar counter. But they have also given it a contemporary edge with smoky green walls, pendant lights and plenty of fresh-cut flowers. And there are plans to convert the basement Georgian kitchen into a private dining room, spa and a cellar for wine- and cheese-tasting.

SLEEP Some of the 14 bedrooms (12 with sea views) are modest, tucked under the eaves; others are large and bright with rows of sash windows. All have unusually

high beds topped with merino throws. Re-covered antique wingbacks and pieces such as a Jacobean fold-out writing desk add character. What was the dining room is now the largest suite, on a corner of the first floor, with a wrought-iron balcony on both sides. Little Victoria's Room, where the princess recuperated, is surprisingly small but has floor-to-ceiling windows looking out across Main Sands.

EAT In the bar, cocktails are served in sturdy tumblers and there's a simple menu of salads (heritage tomato and mozzarella; purple sprouting broccoli, beetroot and butternut squash). Food in the high-ceilinged, navy-blue restaurant is wholesome (whitebait with lemon aioli; a rosemary rack of lamb with dauphinoise potatoes). Pancakes with home-cured bacon and homemade banana bread are served at breakfast, but there is no bread at supper because, as Ben and Emma say, they want you to 'leave feeling healthier than when you arrived'.

WHO GOES THERE? Fans of Alex Polizzi's TV show *The Hotel Inspector* (the restoration featured back in April) and musicians appearing at Ramsgate Music Hall, a test bed for performers before they embark on world tours. Neneh Cherry was an early guest and The Wailers (Bob Marley's old band) are rumoured to be booked in this summer.

WE LIKE The spicy ginger beer in the Moscow Mules, which is home brewed.

WE DON'T LIKE The fake bay trees outside the Town Bar. And fresh milk rather than UHT pods in the bedrooms would be nice.

CONTACT +44 1843 606630; www.albionhouseramsgate.co.uk. Doubles from £145, including breakfast. TABITHA JOYCE



WHILE YOU'RE HERE

Visit the **Royal Harbour Brasserie** at the end of the pier for its super-sized flaky cod goujons. Wander north along the beach to the candy-striped huts at **Broadstairs** and have an ice cream at **Morelli's**, one of the oldest parlours in the UK. For modern art (Bridget Riley, Peter Blake) visit Ramsgate's **UpDown Gallery**; the David Chipperfield-designed **Turner Contemporary**, above, and the newly refurbished **Dreamland** funfair in Margate are just a 20-minute drive away.

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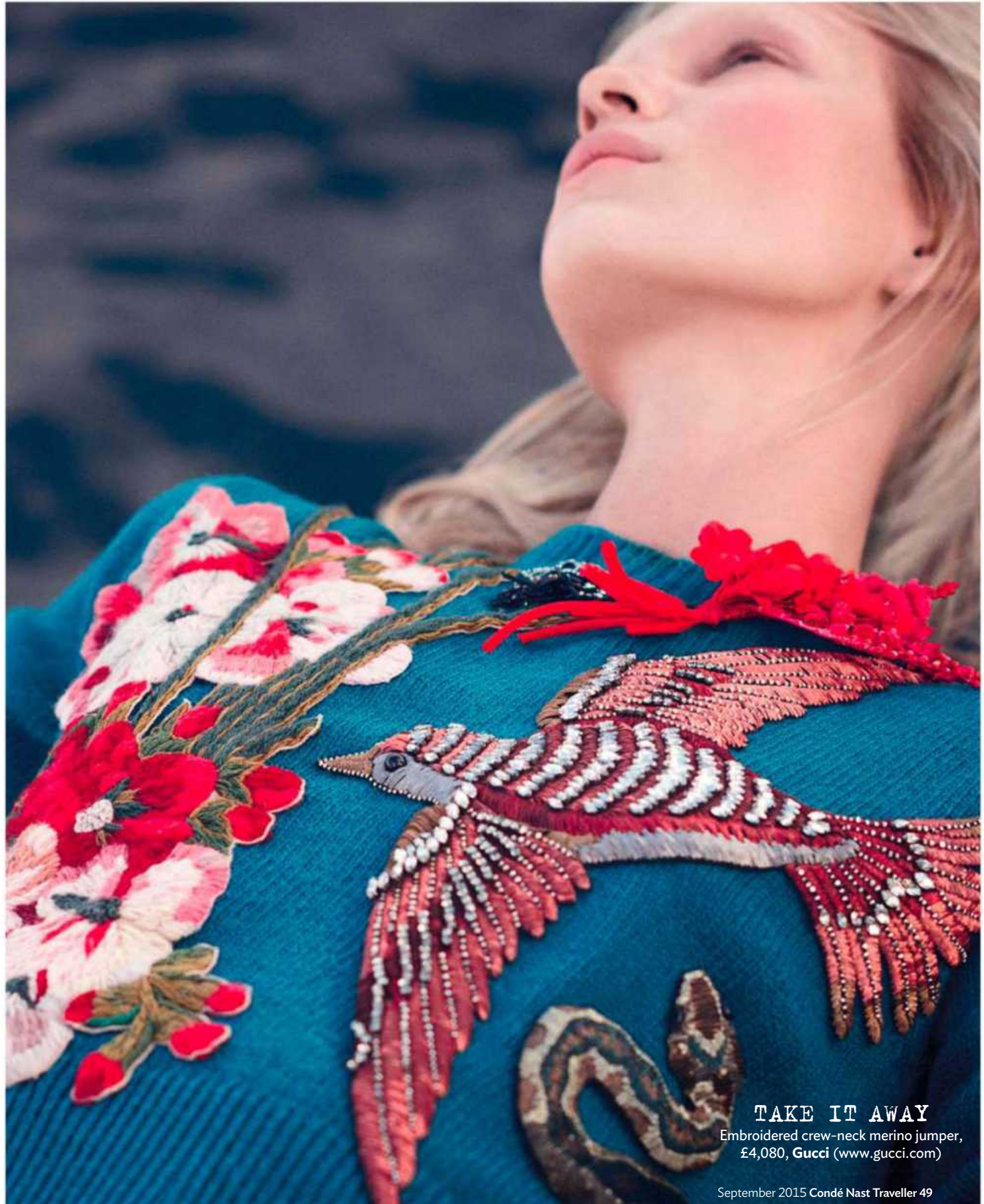
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STYLE FILE

Shopping I present to you The look Jewellery Men's Beauty

EDITED BY FIONA LINTOTT

PHOTOGRAPH: DIMA HOHLOV STYLED BY: HANNAH TEARE HAIR: NAO KAWAKAMI MAKE-UP: AGKUN MANISALI MODEL: NICOLA HAFMANS AT MODELST



TAKE IT AWAY

Embroidered crew-neck merino jumper,
£4,080, **Gucci** (www.gucci.com)

STYLE FILE



Pottery at Hey Rooster General Store. Opposite, its shopfront in East Nashville

SHOPPING IN NASHVILLE

The Tennessee city is home to what is now the hippest hood in the South. Across the Cumberland River from downtown Music City, East Nashville has been transformed by a cadre of designers, musicians, artists and chefs whose collaborative DIY spirit has created an individual and authentic vibe. No twanging country tunes and sequined Western outfits here. Barbecue food sizzles in a gas station car park, two hours of live music cost less than a fiver, and you won't find a chain store for miles. By Sunshine Flint



STYLE FILE



BEST FOR FASHION

SISTERS OF NATURE An exquisitely curated shop that presents its stellar mix of USA-made fair-trade clothing, jewellery and accessories in loosely based themes of desert, field, forest and sea. Fine leather Nisolo wedges and brogues, made in Peru, share shelf space with boxy cactus-print silk tops and clover-and-peony soy candles. And 10 per cent of all sales go to the One Life International charity. 5, 521 Gallatin Avenue (+1 615 270 9219; www.sistersofnatureboutique.com)

MOTO MODA Just next door, behind a rotating roster of classic motorcycles, lies an equally beguiling collection of supple biker jackets and glossy helmets, manly cuffs, turquoise rings and vintage boots. 4, 521 Gallatin Avenue (+1 615 319 4301; www.facebook.com/motomodashop)

FOND OBJECT A cool concept store, with compendiums of colour-coded second-hand clothes and mint-condition records. This is the atelier for fashion label Black By Maria Silver, with a separate house out the back for live music and film screenings. Only ticket holders are

allowed to pet the pig and goats in the yard. 1313 McGavock Pike (+1 615 499 4498; www.fondobjectrecords.com)

PONY SHOW Hot-to-trot leather cowboy boots, kitsch dreamcatchers and magnesite and copper jewellery are artfully displayed in a cosy, rug-filled space alongside owner Pippin Chapman's custom T-shirts. 723 Porter Road (+1 615 319 2244; www.ponyshownashville.com)

BEST FOR BOOKS

EAST SIDE STORY This pint-sized shop only sells works by Nashville authors, which makes for a compelling selection of non-fiction, children's fantasy, poetry and mysteries. Part of The Idea Hatchery, a row of beach-hut-sized retail spaces, the store also runs East Side Storytelling twice a month with resident writers and musicians at The Post East coffee shop. Unit B, 1108 Woodland Street (+1 615 915 1808; www.eastsidestorytn.com)

BEST FOR INTERIORS

FAT CROW PRESS From a neighbouring hut in The Idea Hatchery, Julie Sola sells

hand-pulled lino prints, delicate paper art and footstools, pillows and kids' clothes in sweet textile designs. This city has a number of well-established letterpress and printing companies, including Hatch Show Print where Sola previously worked. Unit D, 1108 Woodland Street (+1 615 364 1567; www.facebook.com/fatcrowpressstore)

HEY ROOSTER GENERAL STORE

Nashville native Courtney Webb has created a clearing house for local artisans and their goods, from screen-printed flour-sack tea towels and delicate gold earrings to polished chopping boards carved out of wood salvaged from the devastating 2010 flood. 1106 Gallatin Avenue (www.heyrooster.com)

BEST FOR MUSIC

FANNY'S HOUSE OF MUSIC, THE FIDDLE HOUSE

Local musicians and famous country stars will wander into Fanny's, pick a honey-coloured vintage Martin guitar from the rows on the wall and start strumming, while around the corner at The Fiddle House both antique and modern violins and violas are sold,



Clockwise from left: *My Shadow*, a print by Julie Sola at Fat Crow Press; a display at Sisters of Nature; The Fiddle House music store; clothing and design shop Fuselage in East Nashville. Opposite, clockwise from top left: a teapot at Hey Rooster General Store; Sisters of Nature; homeware at Hey Rooster General Store; the exterior of Fond Object



LOCAL KNOW-HOW

Maria Silver
FASHION DESIGNER
AND DRUMMER

'I moved here, like others did, to take advantage of the cheap rent, as it allowed me to pursue my art full time. I've stayed because all those artists have helped East Nashville grow into this mecca of restaurants, bars, galleries and markets among beautiful Victorian houses. It feels like a real neighbourhood: I run into people I know all the time, there are no massive office buildings, we have good food and strong drinks. I often pop into **Mas Tacos Por Favor** for the fried avocado tacos and amazing chicken tortilla soup. I get my coffee at **Sip Café**. It's in a former bank. They've kept all the old furniture and there's a drive-through where you can order your coffee to go. I have ramen at least once a week at pop-up **Otaku South**, although it's moving to Division Street soon. **Duke's** is where I've been going for drinks lately; it has good DJs playing cool rock 'n' roll. **Hail, Dark Aesthetic** is the place to pick up trinkets and gifts. It's an oddities shop selling insects and taxidermy, and is great for something totally different.'

restored and repaired. 1101 Holly Street (+1 615 750 5746; www.fannyshouseofmusic.com); 1009 Clearview Avenue (+1 615 730 8402; www.thefiddlehouse.com)

BEST FOR REFUELLING

OLIVE & SINCLAIR An 1890 brick building houses the factory and light-filled shop of this chocolatier, which slow roasts and stone grinds fair-trade cacao beans. This being the South, there's bourbon in the brittle and buttermilk in the white chocolate. The old-timey labels on the bars are so beautifully designed it's a shame to rip them open – until you get a taste of the sea-salt or cinnamon-chilli chocolate inside. 1628 Fatherland Street (+1 615 262 3007; www.oliveandsinclair.com)

HIGH GARDEN In this earthy tea shop/apothecary rows of glass jars with handwritten tags are filled with a treasury of leaves from India, China, Japan and Vietnam, plus dozens of organic and locally grown and foraged herbs. Sip a perfectly

brewed pot at one of the wooden tables or have owner-herbalist Leah Larabell bag up a mixture for whatever ails you. 1006 Fatherland Street (www.highgardentea.com)

BEST FOR STAYING OVER

URBAN COWBOY BNB Direct from Williamsburg in Brooklyn, the second outpost of this hipster-chic brand – check out its Instagram feed – will be up-and-running later this year in a beautiful house on Woodland Street. It's the first hostelry of note to open in East Nashville. www.urbancowboybnb.com

THE 404 Polished concrete floors and 20ft-high ceilings are warmed with faded oriental rugs and blue velvet club chairs at this five-room design hotel in a former car garage in the Gulch neighbourhood. And it's attached to the 404 Kitchen, one of the best restaurants in town. 404 12th Avenue (+1 615 242 7404; www.the404nashville.com). Doubles from about £205

STYLE FILE



I PRESENT TO YOU...

IRIS APFEL

The 93-year-old cover girl designed interiors for nine US presidents, modelled with Karlie Kloss and still carries off the dress she wore on the first date with her husband 68 years ago

ON TRAVEL 'When I set foot on European soil in the very early 1950s it changed my life forever. I adore the architecture in London and Paris; the design of the buildings is so sophisticated. As an interior decorator I travelled across the world, from Italy to Pakistan, always sourcing one-of-a-kind pieces at bazaars and flea markets. I'm a flea-market freak. I like sifting through boxes in vintage stores to find extraordinary things. Although you do have to be careful what you are buying; just because something is vintage does not make it wonderful. As you can probably tell, I'm no minimalist. My dream journey would be a segue from souk to souk from North Africa to the Middle East.'

ON HOTELS 'A lot of places are anonymous these days, all too similar. I like properties with character, especially when it comes to design. A hotel needs to be individual and true to its location. Personalised service is key. I don't like being bothered by lots of staff but will always remember a butler or doorman who recalls my quirks. The little details are what makes a stay memorable. In New York The Carlyle is an institution and has incredible style, so in tune with the city itself. I love hotel rooms for their views. Seeing the lights of Manhattan come on from The Carlyle or watching West Palm Beach sparkle from Eau Palm Beach hotel, nothing can top that.'

ON SHOPPING 'I don't believe in rules when it comes to fashion and I like mixing offbeat things from different periods and places. A piece needs to jump out and say something,

be it clothing or furniture. I am loyal to Duro Olowu and Dries Van Noten, and I love Ralph Rucci. I think he is a genius and a true couturier. I am constantly on a quest for beautiful things. I don't think I'll ever stop searching or collecting.'

ON EXHIBITIONS 'Nothing beats the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. You can discover something new on every visit. My advice is to spend the whole day there: arrive early and leave late. My most memorable exhibition was the display of my own jewellery and accessories at the museum's Costume Institute in 2005. It didn't start out as a fashion show. When Harold Koda, the curator, first contacted me he was only supposed to choose five outfits, but they ended up with 82. It was insanity. The show was a huge smash.'

ON RESTAURANTS 'I love Italian food, and Antonucci Café and Primola in Manhattan are two of my favourite places. But La Grenouille in Midtown is the granddaddy of all restaurants. I love the ambience – it's marvellously old-world. Everyone looks good at La Grenouille.'

Iris Apfel is a Rosewood Hotels curator. 'Iris', a film by Albert Maysles, is out now. Watch the trailer at www.cntraveller.com/irisapfel



Balloon Dog by Jeff Koons at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Above, a balcony at Eau Palm Beach, Florida

SHOP WATCH: INES DE LA FRESSANGE, PARIS

'We won't follow the fashion calendar,' says the incredibly fashionable Inès de la Fressange about her namesake store or, as she describes it, a concept-souk and luxe-bazaar. As muse to Karl Lagerfeld, a model, perfumer and designer in her own right, de la Fressange is an authority on what does and doesn't sell, and she believes the internet has destroyed the experience of shopping. The boutique on the Left Bank showcases her unique and eclectic sense of Parisian style. Bed linen and bicycles, copper boxes and candy-coloured cashmere fill the different rooms, as if it were her house, and sit alongside her own-label clothing and accessories. www.inesdelafressange.fr





Acetate earrings, £200, **Marni** (www.marni.com). Amber and ivory sunglasses, £330, **Fakoshima** (www.notjustalabel.com)



Boyfriend watch in gold, £8,100, **Chanel** (www.chanel.com)



Cashmere roll-neck sweater, £635, **Chloé** (www.net-a-porter.com)



Barton panelled cady skirt, £815, **Roksanda** (www.net-a-porter.com). Loafers, £595, **Stella McCartney** (www.net-a-porter.com)



Plex crystal brooch, £505, **Prada** (www.prada.com). 3Bague shearing handbag, £1,960, **Fendi** (www.fendi.com)



Bikini, £185, **Thapelo** (www.matchesfashion.com)



THE LOOK: ARTHOUSE CHIC

Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Lake Como, Italy

With a spot-on location on the west side of Lake Como, here is a historic grande-dame hotel that would tickle Wes Anderson. Rooms are fantastically over the top with heavily swagged curtains, antique gilt-framed mirrors, velvet armchairs and bathrooms in marble from top to bottom. The best of the bunch come with a coveted balcony overlooking the still, deep waters. There are plenty of places to loll: the lakeside beach club across the road; a peaceful pool surrounded by pretty rose gardens; and the T Spa, which has teamed up with holistic pioneer ESPA. Inside the latter, all is contemporary and slick, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the water and a wooden deck with sunbeds (time it so you're in the outdoor plunge pool for the last of the day's rays). There are also tennis courts, delicious wood-oven pizzas served under umbrellas on the stone terrace, and a sleek, Venetian-style boat for embarking on a private, guided tour. End the day in the main restaurant, La Terrazza, with a bowl of impeccable spaghetti *vongole* while looking out at the lights twinkling in Bellagio and Varenna, two must-visit cobbled towns on the other side of the water. EMMA LOVE *Grand Hotel Tremezzo is a member of the Preferred Hotels & Resorts Legend Collection* (www.preferredhotels.com). Doubles from £460



Catwalk look Pre-A/W15 collection, **JW Anderson**

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHANNA HUBER/SIME/4CORNERS

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Etoile de Mer clip in pink gold, diamonds and pink sapphires

Vagues Mystérieuses clip in white gold, diamonds, tourmalines and sapphires



Rivage Noir et Blanc bracelet in white gold, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, pearls and turquoise



Rouleau Azur bracelet in white gold, diamonds, pearls, lapis lazuli and turquoise



Ancône ring in white gold, platinum, diamonds, sapphires, turquoise and emerald



Cheval des Mers earrings in white gold, onyx, sapphires, diamonds and moonstone. Coquillage Mystérieux ring in gold, diamonds, sapphires and rubies



THE SPLASH PACK

Hit cruise control with a new haul of gems, says Jessica Diamond

How apt that Van Cleef & Arpels is launching its latest High Jewellery collection, Seven Seas, in Monaco. The principality sits gingerly on the verge of its rock, like crumbs swept to the edge of a table, every possible window and balcony facing the water in permanent devotional reverie. More than 100 private clients have been flown in for the first viewing and they gather in the foyer of Hôtel Hermitage before dinner. They're swathed in couture and unsteady on their feet: the combination of lacquered up-dos, heels and impressive jewellery (Van Cleef, of course) throwing their centre of gravity off kilter. A huge emerald necklace walks past: a double strand with stones as big as 50-pence pieces. 'It's the necklace from last year's collection,' somebody whispers, 'that's 12 million right there.' I want to ask 12 million what, but then realise with that sort of figure, it doesn't really matter. But, in fact, as CEO and creative director Nicolas Bos later talks me through Seven Seas he discusses a new direction, moving away from such statement gems. 'I want it to capture the spirit of a fashion cruise collection. I see these jewels slipped on at a cocktail party in Sorrento and not just worn once or twice a year at a formal event.' The 140 pieces are a global gallop around seven iconic seas, from the Red to the Mediterranean; the frothing, shimmering subject matter inspiring an informal lightness of touch.

Swirls of blue-on-blue pinpricked with diamonds (Paraiba tourmalines, lapis lazuli, turquoise and sapphires feature heavily), the palest pink carved angel-skin coral (retrieved from the archives it's so rare), and an Art Deco hit of black-onyx and white-pearl combinations make up the offering. Marine creatures – a starfish, turtles and seahorses – add the signature Van Cleef animal touch. When we gather the next day to see the jewellery on show at Villa Paloma conspicuous gaps in the display mark good news: since the previous night's dinner some pieces have already sold. Those cocktail parties in Sorrento just got a lot more sparkly.

All jewellery, POA, Van Cleef & Arpels Seven Seas collection (www.vancleefarpels.com)



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PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN CULLEN



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MAN ON A MISSION

THE MAN

Richard H Turner knows his meat. The chef behind Hawksmoor, Foxlow, Blacklock and Pitt Cue Co, he's also one half of the independent butcher Turner & George, and two years ago launched London's Meatopia festival, a weekend celebration of meat, music, drink and fire.

THE MISSION

To find the perfect shawarma, somewhere in the heart of the Middle East: five days, four countries, 30 kebabs.

MILES TRAVELLED LAST YEAR

7,500 (and half a metric tonne of meat consumed).

WEIRDEST THING EATEN

'One man's poison is another man's dinner.

Personally I'll eat almost anything: guts, gizzards, even insects and spiders. I do struggle with kiwi fruit though – it tastes of pure evil.'

MUST PACK

'Good footwear. For day-to-day travel I wear trusty, old-fashioned desert boots. For anything more arduous I like Wolverine 1000 Mile boots. They must be broken in, though: only a rookie travels with new footwear. You can have all the shiny kit you like but if you can't walk it'll do you no good at all.'

Chop to it: Richard H Turner (holding cleaver) with the Meatopia crew, from left: DJ BBQ, Mat Kemp, Melissa Cole, Mark Parr, James George

Here I am in Dubai, fresh in from Israel and the West Bank, where I feasted with the PLO high command. Dubai is a vast contrast – all flashy high-rise hotels and freshly laid highways – but it's the city's underbelly, with its backstreet vendors and hidden cafés, that I'm here for. I'm on a quest for the perfect shawarma: the magnificent, spit-roasted delicacy of the Middle East, which I'm hoping will transform Britain's attitudes to the kebab.

Kebabs in this country exemplify our cheap-meat culture; all that intensively farmed 'dirty doner' meat consumed after a night in the pub. My aim is to resuscitate this humble dish, to make it something people actually want to eat when they are sober, starting at Meatopia, where we are planning to serve the world's best goat shawarma.

Unlike the doner, which is minced lamb roasted upright, proper shawarma is layered meat, pressed together so it resembles a cocoon and spit-roasted sideways over charcoal. Although its origins are Turkish, it's more widely eaten in the Middle East, which is why I'm here on a four-country kebab crawl. And crawl I do, from hole-in-the-wall joints to Dubai's more gourmet places such as S'wich. Although I learn interesting things about spicing, much of what I eat is cooked upright, over gas; and the meat is cut-price Australian beef smeared with mutton fat, a problem I encounter all over the region. Eager for more, I fly on to Amman and visit a host of down-and-dirty neighbourhood hangouts, salivating at Shawerma Al-Faris, where the chicken shawarma was invented. They serve it with fried potatoes sliced up in the meat and, crucially, roasted on the horizontal above charcoal. I feel we're getting closer to my dream kebab. When the fat drips off a vertical shawarma it just sits at the bottom, but when it drips off a horizontal one it hits the charcoal and explodes, splattering the meat with smoky intensity.

Next up is Lebanon, the epicentre of Middle Eastern food, which all the other countries look to, as we do to France. In Beirut, the flavour of the shawarma is cleaner, less dominated by lemon juice than in Jordan, with the herbs and spices to the fore: za'atar, cumin, sumac. It's good, but not quite perfect. Finally I arrive in Istanbul, famous for the open-grill ocakbasi shish kebabs that dominate Turkish cuisine in the UK, but also the original home of the shawarma. Şehzade Erzurum Cağ Kebabi serves smoky, fatty mutton with chopped grilled tomatoes rolled in a cigar shape within a delicate bread, and cooked on a hot dome. Even sitting here with the meat juice dribbling down my chin, I know I'm still to eat the perfect shawarma, but I now know what I have to do to create it.'

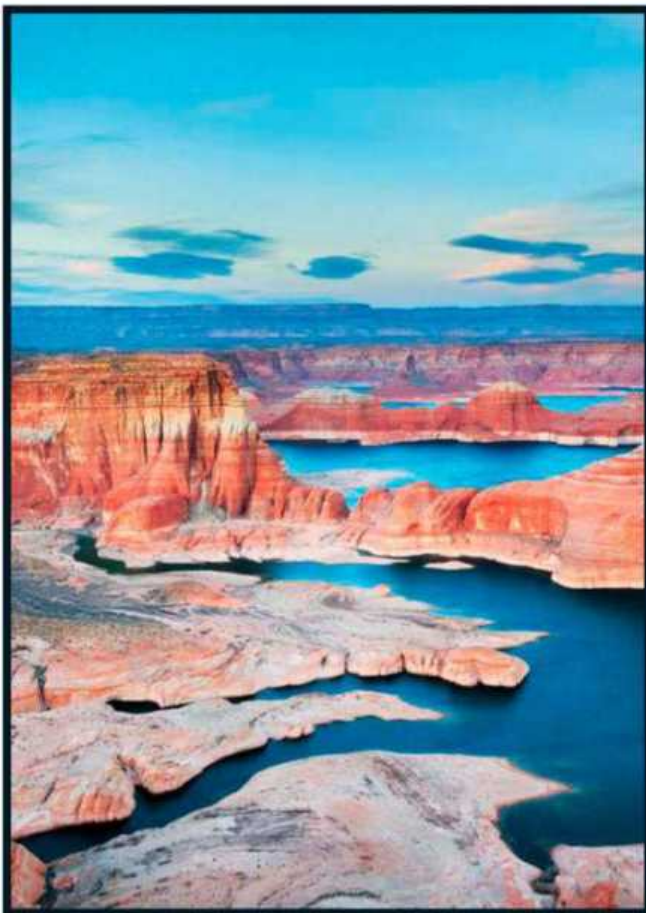
Meatopia (www.meatopia.co.uk) takes place on 19–20 September at London's Tobacco Dock

GET THE LOOK: THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES

Let Gael García Bernal's portrayal of Che Guevara inspire you to revolutionise your wardrobe



From left: Boston leather blazer, £1,169, **Matchless** (www.matchless.com); fishtail trousers, £160, **Oliver Spencer** (www.oliver Spencer.com); Whitby shirt, £145, **Orlebar Brown** (www.orlebarbrown.co.uk); brogue boots, £250, **Dr Martens** (www.drmartens.co.uk)



DAVID'S POSTCARD FROM... LAKE POWELL

Southern Utah. The layers of rock seem scorched, as if cast in some Dantean inferno. From a distance, it looks profoundly empty, pre-biological. Up close you can see the desert flowers, the flickering lizards. This is Baudrillard's Vanishing Point, where the French cultural theorist came to find Astral America, with its desert speed, mineral surfaces, absolute freedom. And it's obvious why. The five-hour drive from Vegas is Baudrillard all over: malls, monster trucks, motels and Mormons. But mostly it's emptiness. Monumental emptiness. The area is one of the fullest earthbound illustrations of the universe's immensity and duration. Yet it feels tamed. Here I am, on the back of a boat powering across Lake Powell, the reservoir created by the Glen Canyon Dam. There is a strange sort of roiling stillness here, a different but equally terrifying kind of sublimity. The two forces – the epic absence of the desert and the obdurate pioneer belligerence of the dam – seem to be locked in an enduring stand-off. Or at least that's how it seems until you ride in a helicopter, as I did later, and get a true sense of the lake's bath-tub ring, the calcium-carbonate deposits that illustrate how far down it is from its highwater mark. The dam might hold firm, but the waters are receding. The pioneer spirit is undimmed but desert is asserting itself. The absence is flooding in. The vanishing point approaches...

David wears *Champion* sunglasses, £99, *Carrera* (www.carreraworld.com). To see more of his trip visit www.cntraveller.com/utah-guide



STYLE FILE

Do you have any tips for looking good after a long-haul journey?

'If you're coming off an overnight flight I recommend sunglasses, then you don't need to do anything with your eyes. I like Touche Eclat; it's an easy way to cover up imperfections. And a MAC red lipstick instantly helps you seem made-up – although with red lipstick in an airport you do run the risk of being a bit "look at me".'



How do you get ready for the red carpet?

'All I need is a make-up artist because I definitely can't do it on my own. Val Garland is amazing. I love a smoky eye. One thing I have learnt is that dark red works well around blue eyes. It really makes them pop.'



What colour nail varnish do you take on holiday?

'I like dark blue. Chanel does the best nail polish.'



How do you keep fit?

'If I don't stay active it puts me in a bad mood. I do short bursts of cardio for 20 to 30 minutes at a time or I'll hire a personal trainer to be mean to me. I enjoy running and Thai boxing too.'



BEAUTY KIT: EVA GREEN

The Bond Girl and *Sin City* star who has dabbled in witchcraft reveals her secrets to Tabitha Joyce

Have you ever had to drastically change your hairstyle for a film?

'Not yet, but I'd really like to cut it all off. I'm just waiting for the role.'

What fragrance do you wear?

'Santa Maria Novella's Melograno. I take it with me when I travel.'



How do you keep your hair healthy in the sun?

'L'Oréal Professionnel's Pro Fiber is an incredibly effective treatment for damaged hair – it's perfect after a holiday in the heat, particularly for me because my hair is really terrible. Oils are also good, any oil: I've tried olive, sesame and black-seed.'



Do you watch your diet?

'I worry a lot – I think that's how I stay slim. But then I am pretty good about food too. I don't eat a lot of red meat; in fact, I'm almost vegan. Although of course I'm French, so I need red wine. And I love juicing; I make my own combination in the morning with carrot, kale, apple, ginger and turmeric. I really believe it makes me feel better in myself.'

What products do you use as part of your daily skincare routine?

'I always cleanse with Cetaphil. It's very cheap – you can get it in Boots – but it's gentle and for me it's the best. Then I apply a thick moisturiser, usually Avène Cold Cream. It's meant for cold weather, but my skin is very fragile so I use it all year round.'

Do you like to sunbathe?

'I'm not a big fan of lying on the beach; I prefer a more activity-based holiday. And I always use SPF50 sun cream or the maximum protection I can get my hands on, even if it means I end up looking like a ghost. SkinCeuticals products are my favourite.'



How many hours sleep do you need a night?

'I tend to manage on five or six. I've always been like that, but it can't be good for me, can it? The best sleep I've had in years was at Singita Lebombo Lodge in South Africa. The Kruger National Park is truly magical.'

Eva Green is the international spokesperson for L'Oréal Professionnel

From top: lipstick in Lady Danger, £15.50, **MAC** (www.maccosmetics.co.uk). Touche Eclat, £25, **YSL** (www.yslbeauty.co.uk). Le Vernis nail polish in Vibrato, £18, **Chanel** (www.chanel.com). Melograno Acqua di Colonia, £85, **Santa Maria Novella** (+44 20 7493 1975). Pro Fiber Revive shampoo, £12.99, **L'Oréal Professionnel** (available from salons nationwide). Ultra Facial Defense SPF50, £35, **SkinCeuticals** (www.skinceuticals.co.uk)

Vanakkam... Vaango...
A Tamil Nadu custom of
welcoming guests
The Giant Squirrels are
no exceptions



Even as you drive through the winding hairpin bends and canopied trees, you can spot the wide-eyed and bushy tailed Giant Squirrels doing a welcome peek. Identified by their staccato clickety clacks, they are all over the place - swinging from one branch to another, or snoozing on treetops when they are not skulking into dark shadows beneath the overhanging boughs.

The Giant Squirrels and the Grizzled Giant Squirrels are endemic to Valparai and Srivilliputhur.

DESTINATIONS TO SPOT SQUIRRELS : * Anaimalai Reserve & Indira Gandhi National Park



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TRENDWATCH



POSTCARDS ON THE EDGE

Are postcards obsolete in today's tech-smitten world? Not in the least. After all, what is Instagram but a modern-day version: a rose-tinted snap of wherever you are with a few 'wish-you-were-here' words attached? There are now dozens of apps that turn photographs on phones into a good old-fashioned card sent straight to loved ones' mantelpieces, fridges and corkboards. Touchnote is perhaps the sleekest and easiest-to-use (a Google map of your location can be added, should the recipient want extra proof of your whereabouts), while Postino is a stand-out for its trademark borderless images. Postdroid lets users choose the date they want the postcard to be delivered and Montager creates collages of multiple shots. And now augmented-reality specialist Zappar is working with personalised photo-printing company Sticky9 to take the postcard to the next level: throwing video footage into the digital-physical mix and enabling a tangible postcard to come alive via the wizardry of smartphone technology (see ours, *above*, in motion by following the simple instructions below). To send your own postcard-video duo, simply record a 15-second Instagram clip and head to www.sticky9.com. This renaissance is not all about new-fangled adaptations however. The postcards of old are also enjoying a fresh lease of life. A stack of them hoarded by high-profile artists including Peter Blake, Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst star in the Barbican exhibition *Magnificent Obsessions: The Artist as Collector*, showing at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia from this month to January 2016. Recent research* also reveals that, like other nostalgic revivals, millennials are more likely to purchase postcards, with 35 per cent of 18 to 30 year olds saying that they buy them on holiday, compared to just 19 per cent of 31 to 49 year olds. Though whether they actually get round to writing and posting them is another story. BECKY LUCAS

To play our funky little video-postcard, download the Zappar app, scan the 'ZAP IT' icon above with your smartphone and see our model jump into action in our behind-the-scenes fashion shoot on St Barth's

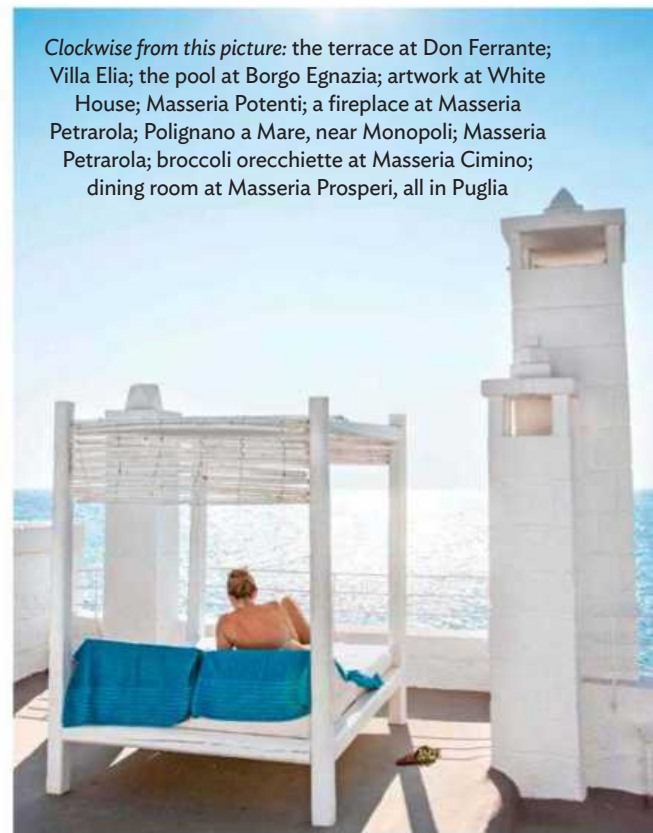


MAMMA SAID





KNOCK YOU OUT



Clockwise from this picture: the terrace at Don Ferrante; Villa Elia; the pool at Borgo Egnazia; artwork at White House; Masseria Potenti; a fireplace at Masseria Petrarola; Polignano a Mare, near Monopoli; Masseria Petrarola; broccoli orecchiette at Masseria Cimino; dining room at Masseria Prosperi, all in Puglia

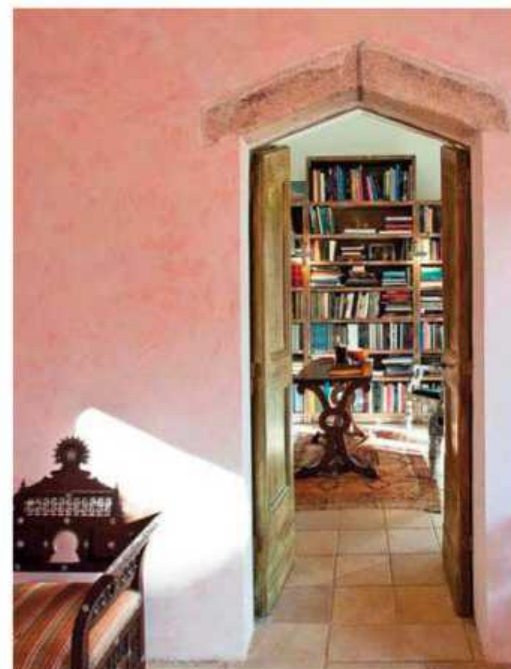
VILLA ELIA

Where the party's at

Follow Jude Law's lead and book this impressive place. As soon as you enter, there's no denying you're in the house of a cultured Italian globetrotter, not some interiors whizz who is faking it. As good for families as groups of friends, Elia has character and class, but it's also great fun with its quirky decor, private cinema and a wood-fired oven for impromptu pizza gatherings. As an added bonus, chichi Gallipoli is just around the corner. Definitely one of Puglia's most stylish villas. +44 20 7377 8518; www.the-thinkingtraveller.com. Sleeps up to 17; from about £4,150 per week

Opposite, from top: entrance to the reading room at Masseria Lamacoppa; Trullo Barone's terrace; the pared-back design of Villa Elia

Back in the 1980s, when everyone was going to Chianti on villa holidays, few of us had even heard of Puglia. A decade later, word got out about the southern Italian region of fertile red earth, gnarled olives, turquoise seas, beautiful trulli and pioneering masseria hotels. All of a sudden, Puglia was proclaimed the New Tuscany – a little before it was ready. But in the aftermath of such hype it has come into its own, maturing quietly and steadily out of the limelight. For anyone looking for stylish places to stay, good food and wine, beach clubs, history, culture and natural beauty, this robustly rustic land is difficult to beat. And now all those trailblazing converted farmhouses have been joined by sophisticated new arrivals that combine world-class design with the warmth and originality of the area. Lee Marshall, who has lived in Italy for 30 years, lifts the lid on the best places to stay, eat and drink.



VILLAS

MASSERIA LAMACOPPA

Punchy historic splendour

This marvellously cultivated villa feels a bit like an Italian chateau. The architecture is that of a fortified masseria from the 17th century, but in restoring it and filling it with antiques from India and Morocco, contemporary art and a whole library of books, the owners – scions of a celebrated family publishing concern – have introduced masses of international panache and grandeur to the proceedings. Add a huge pool and the ministrations of the live-in staff and it's easy to see why the house is booked out for most of the summer, despite the price tag. +44 20 7377 8518; www.thethinkingtraveller.com. Sleeps up to 17; from about £6,090 per week

TRULLO BARONE

An architectural masterpiece

Many of Puglia's rural trulli have been turned into holiday retreats, although the picturesque, conical exteriors often hide cramped, windowless rooms. Not so at this dreamy place near Ostuni: a cluster of interlocking stonehouses and an additional building allowed architect and interior designer Barbara Frua to create a light and airy five-bedroom hideaway with cool Lecce stone, lime-washed walls and a poured-cement floor, which has been given an autumnal tinge by using red soil. Frua's love of natural materials is reflected in details such as the sandstone lamps designed by local artist Renzo Buttazzo. The dining terrace, with its hefty white-stone table, is primed for feasts of ripe figs, tangy sheep's cheese, wafer-thin Parma ham and a bottle of Fiano. Email mario@mariocamozzi.com. Sleeps nine; from about £1,075 per week





WHITE HOUSE

Ethno-centric beach beauty

When beachwear designer Liza Bruce and artist Nicholas Alvis Vega discovered the ramshackle Lecce seaside suburb of Torre Chianca in the late 1990s, they fell in love with its unpretentious beachcombing charms – and were amazed to pick up a seaside house for a song. They now have two: one is their own home, the other's available for rent to anyone who likes the idea of having a bohemian, dune-side perch, its white interior setting off a world of colourful Uzbek and Kenyan fabrics, Moroccan lamps, Ethiopian chairs and Grottaglie ceramics. This is sand-between-the-toes originality at its best. +44 1608 658627; www.petershamproperties.com. Sleeps 10; from about £1,500 per week





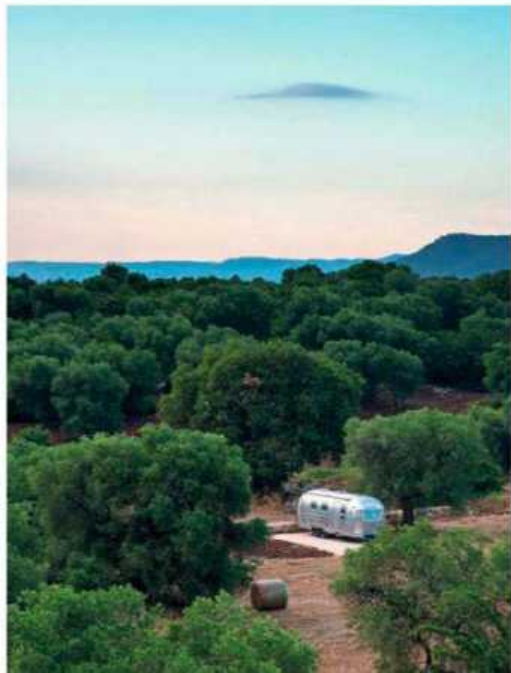
CLIFF HOUSE

High drama with a dash of edgy modernism

In Salento, the heel of the Italian boot on the Adriatic side, the weathered limestone plateau hits the coast in a tumble of jagged rock, carpeted with prickly pears and globe thistles. There are a few beaches and – for good geological reasons – a few houses built close enough to the land's edge to appreciate its stark magnificence. The Cliff House, near Gagliano del Capo, is one of the exceptions.

With its clean lines, floor-to-ceiling windows and wide

sea-facing terraces, this retreat feels like the deck of a ship anchored in rock, but in thrall to the waters, across which the rising sun lays a golden track to Greece. Lecce-based architect Raffaele Centonze has made the four-bedroom villa a cool realm of light, while interior designer Barbara Frua has softened its horizontals with a sapient mix of found objects and suave design classics. *email villaincantoleuca@gmail.com. Sleeps eight; from about £1,090 per week*



MASSERIA PETRAROLO

Ramped-up villa

Set on a 75-acre rural estate in a part of Italy where large properties are becoming a rarity, 17th-century Petrarolo appears, from certain angles, to levitate above a sea of trees. Rather than open a hotel, the owners made the wise decision to rent it out as one of Puglia's most exclusive villas. A four-year restoration – finishing touches were overseen by designer Alexander Waterworth (Annabel's, Soho House Miami) – has resulted in a pitch-perfect mix of elegant antique

furniture, rustic farmhouse finds and weathered Trani flagstones. An abundance of rugs, textiles and candles warm things up, and the walled citrus grove is a delight. In addition, the revamped 1973 Airstream Overlander set in the olive groves makes an inspired hideaway for couples or tortured writers. Staff, including the (recommended) option of a chef, take the pain out of renting and make this nothing less than a very smart villa to share with friends. www.masseria-petrarolo.com. Sleeps 16; from about £8,235 per week



RESTAURANTS

MASSERIA IL FRANTOIO

No-nonsense home cooking

For the best feast between Brindisi and Bari, my vote goes to this charming rural masseria in the olive belt near Ostuni.

Even if you're staying elsewhere it's worth booking ahead to experience the fantastic traditional dinner, most of it cooked with home-grown organic ingredients, served on the stroke of 8.30pm in a pretty, plant-fringed courtyard. Signor Armando, who owns and runs the place with his wife Rosalba, is an enchanting host, and after a pudding of goat's-cheese *sformato* served with San Giovanni pears and a glass of Le Ricordanze dessert wine, you may be tempted to ask him if by any chance he has a spare room. +39 083 133 0276; www.masserialfrantoio.it. About £80 for two

LO SCALO

Delightful retro charmer

'*Nel blu, dipinto di blu*'. If Puglian crooner Domenico Modugno's 1958 international hit 'Volare' comes to mind as you tuck into a plate of grilled Gallipoli red prawns at this simple waterside restaurant and old-school beach club, it's not just because of the prevailing colour, which is present in sea, sky and the deep lapis-lazuli hue of Lo Scalo's umbrellas and sun loungers. It's also because the whole spirit of the place – run by the Longo family for more than 40 years – harks back to an unhurried earlier era. +39 083 353 3488; www.ristoranteloscalo.it. About £60 for two

ANTICHI SAPORI

Revolutionary food hero

It's an ordinary-looking place in a modern rural village, but the blackboard is a giveaway that something is different. Instead of highlighting the daily specials, there's a list of what's ready to pick in the kitchen garden. This commitment to the land and its seasons really marks out Pietro Zito's ground-breaking trattoria, which has become a Puglian foodie magnet. The mixed antipasti is a revelation (that wild-rocket frittata, those sun-dried courgettes in red-wine vinegar) and it just gets better. Book and make the detour, though it's not so much of a schlep if you're headed to one of the region's great attractions, Emperor Frederick II's fascinating folly of Castel del Monte. +39 088 356 9529; www.antichisapori-pietrozito.it. About £50 for two

LALTRO BAFFO

A fresh take on seafood

In the ancient Centro Storico of Otranto, not far from the 12th-century cathedral with its marvellous mosaic floor, this smart trattoria, much frequented by the Italian flip-flop intelligentsia that bases itself in the town in summer, does southern seafood with a flourish. Chef Cristina Conte's creative way with fish is evident in dishes such as delicate sea bream and scampi balls in a smoky broth with hints of lemongrass. And for Otranto, it's not even that expensive. +39 083 680 1636; www.laltrobaffo.com. About £90 for two



PHOTOGRAPHS: KEN KOCHEY

Clockwise from main picture: the restored Masseria Petrarolo; Laltro Baffo trattoria in Otranto; green beans and tomatoes with Marzotica ricotta at Masseria Il Frantoio; Masseria Petrarolo's vintage Airstream; the villa's sitting room



HOTELS

MASSERIA POTENTI

Fitness and foodie haven

The creation of Milan-based *pugliesi* Paolo Tommasino and Maria Grazia Di Lauro, this masseria nails sophisticated, barefoot chic like few others. Di Lauro's taste and eye for detail come through in the rustic-modern interiors, and the service is genuine and warm. Close to some of Puglia's best beaches, Potenti is just one of a handful of places to stay in the Manduria area, a seaside frontier dotted with nature reserves and Primitivo vineyards (like the hotel's own). Alongside wine, healthy food is a big part of any stay here: no foams, just good, garden-fresh regional dishes – like the delicious aubergine polpetta – courtesy of a talented local mother-and-daughter team, who also rustle up sumptuous breakfast feasts, much of it based on the hotel's own produce. There's a real spiritual energy to this place, so it's no surprise it has become a popular spot for yoga retreats. +39 099 973 5408; www.masseriapotenti.it.

Doubles from about £130

IL CONVENTO DI SANTA MARIA DI COSTANTINOPOLI

Time-honoured classic

In the spring of 2003, the late, great collector, interior-design pundit and political fundraiser Alistair McAlpine and his wife Athena opened their 15th-century convent in Diso to paying guests. Despite a flurry of press interest in the early days, this remains an unshowy, insider kind of place for those who get that it's a home, not a hotel, and are prepared to enter into the house-party spirit. Still lovingly tended by Athena – one of whose roles, she says, is to help her guests fall in love with Puglia's rough-and-readiness – the nine-room guesthouse acts as an informal gallery for

McAlpine's treasure trove of ethnic textiles, tribal art and a vast library stocked with first-edition books. Outside, the inviting pool is surrounded by giant cacti, dwarf palms and other sun-loving exotics. Rates include a generous breakfast of homemade goodies that runs until 1pm as well as wine and soft drinks, help-yourself snacks from the kitchen and laundry service. There's nothing from the scruffy walled exterior to indicate what lies within, not even a sign. 'But,' says Athena, 'once they're in, most guests don't want to leave.' +44 7736 362 328. Doubles from about £250

LA FIERMONTINA

A standout city hideout

As the unofficial capital of southern Puglia, Lecce's honey-hued old town with its time-softened baroque architecture has many admirers, and its gentle gentrification continues apace, as this 16-room beauty attests. Opened in June, it represents a return to his ancestral roots for French-born owner Giacomo Fiermonte, whose grandmother moved to Paris from Lecce in the 1930s. Twelve years ago, he bought one of the few historic palazzos within the city walls still in private hands, and worked with local architect Antonio Annicchiario and Parisian interiors firm Charles-Philippe and Christophe to create a different Lecce hotel. It's a little like a designer monastery, a discreetly stylish refuge in the centre of town combining star-vaulted ceilings with vintage modernist furnishings by Charlotte Perriand and contemporary art from the owner's private collection. The large walled garden consists mostly of ancient olive trees, beyond which lies the cool green pool. In the restaurant, Simone Solido serves up authentic local dishes such as *ciceri e tria* (pasta and chickpeas) with less-is-more flair. +39 083 230 2481 www.lafiermontina.com.

Doubles from about £160



From top: the Masseria Potenti hotel; dining room at Il Convento di Santa Maria di Costantinopoli; the view of La Fiermontina from the olive garden. Opposite, a bedroom at Masseria Potenti



DON FERRANTE

Stately waterside refuge

This 10-room charmer is built into the walls of Monopoli, a characterful sea-girt warren of whitewashed houses that feels more Greek than Italian. The bedrooms are classy boltholes under the vaults of what was once an 18th-century nobleman's house, but the clincher is the roof terrace and bar, where sunset *aperitivi* are served. +39 080 742 521; www.donferrante.it.

Doubles from about £155

MASSERIA TORRE COCCARO & TORRE MAIZZA

The slick sister act

Dominated by a 16th-century watchtower that later became a fortified farmhouse, this is a delightfully laid-back place that works for both families and couples (it can arrange kids' pizza lessons as well as a quick round on the golf course). The

owner is mover and shaker Vittorio Muolo – one of the founding fathers of the masserie and beach-club scene in Puglia's fishing village of Savelletri – who opened Torre Coccaro back in 2002. The

rooms combine Puglian rusticity with touches of Frenchified elegance. Its nearby sister hotel, Masseria Torre Maizza, is more knowingly stylish and dressy, its 26 suites soothing refuges from the summer glare.

Best of all is the hidden swimming pool with a secret weapon: underwater music. *Masseria Torre Coccaro* (+39 080 482 9310; www.masseriatorrecoccaro.com). *Doubles from about £205*. *Masseria Torre Maizza* (+39 080 482 7838; www.masseriatorremaizza.com). *Doubles from about £215*

MASSERIA LE FABRICHE

Wine-loving sanctuary

This is a stone masseria built on a rise above a sweep of vineyards in Maruggio.

The sophisticated interiors are a little Milan (a plum-hued designer sofa) and a touch peasant-chic (ceramic gewgaws from nearby Grottaglie). There are 18 cool rooms set in the estate's olive groves, like vastly spruced up versions of estate farmworkers' quarters. The restaurant serves perfect local dishes – mozzarella-filled ravioli – accompanied by some very good house wine. Nearby beaches such as Conte d'Ayala give those in the Maldives a run for their money. And all this at a price that remains sane even in high season.

+39 099 987 1852; www.lefabriche.it.

Doubles from about £130

MASSERIA PROSPERI

Family-run haven with animal magic

Mercedes Prosperi's mother and sister run Masseria Montelauro – a reference

point for fans of Puglian country allure – but here, near Laghi Alimini, Prosperi has carved out a refreshingly kooky fiefdom of her own. A lifelong animal lover, she keeps horses, donkeys, goats and geese on this bohemian working farm. Though the location – right behind a less exalted masseria hotel – could be better, the mix of vintage and modern design of this new-build six-room retreat is seductive. +39 333 136 0671; www.masseriaprosperti.it. *Doubles from about £120*

BORG EGNAZIA

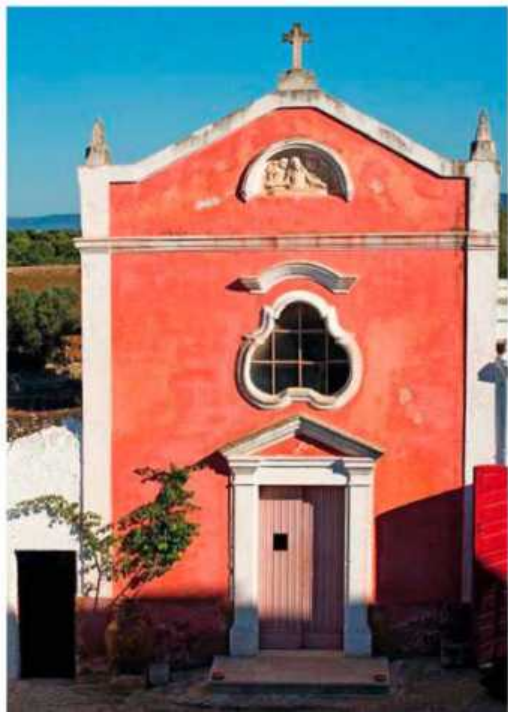
Glamour on a grand scale

There is nothing in Puglia quite like this, a vast hotel-village with a riad feel that sprawls luxuriantly over three areas. At the centre is a gorgeous 63-room masseria hotel. Families tend to opt for the more relaxed apartments, which give on to the lanes and piazzas of a tasteful faux-rural hamlet. For larger groups, there are 29 individual villas with private pools. Borgo Egnazia can absorb well over 300 people in high season, yet it's remarkably easy to carve out a private corner. There are four pools, as many restaurants (in varying venues from cellars to the beach), and an ethno-glam spa with a cinema. Local advisors sort tours or activities and indulge guests' whims: there's even a dedicated, in-house bicycle rental guy. +39 080 225 5000; www.borgoegnazia.com.

Doubles from about £160

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Don Ferrante in Monopoli; the entrance to Masseria Torre Coccaro; a room at Borgo Egnazia; dining table at Masseria Prosperi; view of Masseria Torre Coccaro from the olive groves; Masseria Le Fabriche's sitting room; a church near Masseria Torre Coccaro; Borgo Egnazia; hanging birdcages at the hotel





MASSERIA CIMINO

Stylishly informal

This one is sweet and discreet, while its sister hotel Borgo Egnazia (see previous page) is big, bold and grand. A side project of the latter's owner-manager

Aldo Melpignano, it's a plum-red, 18th-century fortified masseria surrounded by olive groves, and makes a virtue of its simplicity. The farmhouse-bedrooms are elegant but authentic, and breakfasts and dinners are good, unfussy local fare (Pugliese pasta dishes made with vegetables grown in the garden). A wonderfully unpretentious antidote to some of the region's dressier places to eat and stay. +39 080 482 7886; www.masseria-cimino.com. Doubles from about £130

Opposite, from top: Coccaro Beach Club; a minimalist bathroom at Masseria Cimino; the hotel's sitting room with hanging cactus pads





BEACH SCENE

SAVELLETRI

Laid-back seafaring town

Savelletri is home to six of the region's most luxurious masseria hotels; but, at heart it's still a modest, laid-back fishing town and seaside resort. **Pescheria 2 Mari** is a working fishmonger's at the southern end of the *passaggiata* that now doubles as a cool lunch stop and *aperitivo* bar, where raw seafood platters command attention. Nearby, **Ristorante Maddalena** has a lovely sea-level terrace and serves reliable southern Italian seafood. The old-school waiters are presided over by owner Vito Nardelli, who previously worked at Locanda Locatelli. Vittorio Muolo, owner of Masseria Torre Coccaro and Torre Maizza, has two of the best beach clubs – the relaxed **Coccaro Beach Club**, with Bali-style daybeds shaded by palm-fronded canopies, and the younger, more Ibiza-style **White Beach**, where the parties are legendary. Anchored by Borgo Egnazia's seafood restaurant Pescheria da Vito, **Cala Masciola** beach club drapes itself rather lazily around a pretty rocky cove, port of departure for fishing

expeditions and coastal jaunts. **San Domenico a Mare** is the smartest place to stay: a romantic enclave on a platform above the waves. In 2013, four waterfront suites were added to the existing **La Nassa** bar-restaurant to make this Puglia's most exclusive shoreline boutique hotel.

Doubles from about £285

SALENTO

Peninsula with the hottest sands

Salento has some of the best beaches on mainland Italy. **Lido Punta della Suina**'s deep-blue sun loungers and umbrellas are set about on a photogenic sandy bay and little islet, and the sea looks positively Caribbean. Nearby **Makò** is a little more rugged, like its mainly gay fans. For a classic seaside experience with a hipster twist, head for pretty Santa Caterina, a small, relaxed family resort with one super-cool beach bar, **Beija-Flor**. Though they have a few sunbeds, the main draws are the light, veggie-friendly lunch menu and the sunset *aperitivo* scene, when well-mixed Mojitos are served to a DJ set. 



OFF THE GRID

FOLLOW THE BIG SKIES AND OPEN
LITTLE KAROO. HERE IS A SIMPLE
CRAFTY CROWD IS QUIETLY KICKING



ROADS THAT LEAD TO SOUTH AFRICA'S ZEBRA-ZIG-ZAGGED WORLD WHERE A UP THE DUST WITH STYLISH SWAGGER

BY CHARLOTTE SINCLAIR. PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID CROOKES





LVERY BIG CITY needs a country retreat, a place of fresh air and pleasures authentic and Wi-Fi-free. East of Cape Town, the Little Karoo is a 290km strip of semi-desert that trims the edge of the vast wilderness of the Great Karoo. Wedged between the Swartberg mountain range to the north and the Langeberg range to the south, the *Klein Karoo* is home to dust-bowl towns, sheep farms, river-threaded valleys, dramatic mountain passes and mile upon mile of empty veld.

There is treasure here, if you know where to look. Imagine the Australian outback at a two-hour clip from London, combined with the artistic bohemia of New York's Hudson Valley – but with cheetahs and lions thrown in – and you have something of the strange and fascinating charm of the place. It's a particular, out-of-time, off-map allure that has worked its magic on creative city dwellers who have trickled here, seeking beauty and space and peace, to set up home in the Little Karoo's Dutch gabled

houses, converting farmsteads into galleries and design studios, establishing imaginative restaurants, and, best of all for visitors, creating gem-like guesthouses and rentable homes that are a lesson in effortless style and soul-powering substance in the absolute middle of nowhere.

Route 62 unspools across the heart of the Little Karoo, rising and falling through hills and valleys like a cardiogram, the land growing wilder by the mile. This road and the secrets it unfolds remain hidden from the tourist hordes that race up and down the coastal Garden Route. From Cape Town, it quickly casts off from civilisation, passing under an archway blasted through rock and out into the treeless plains.

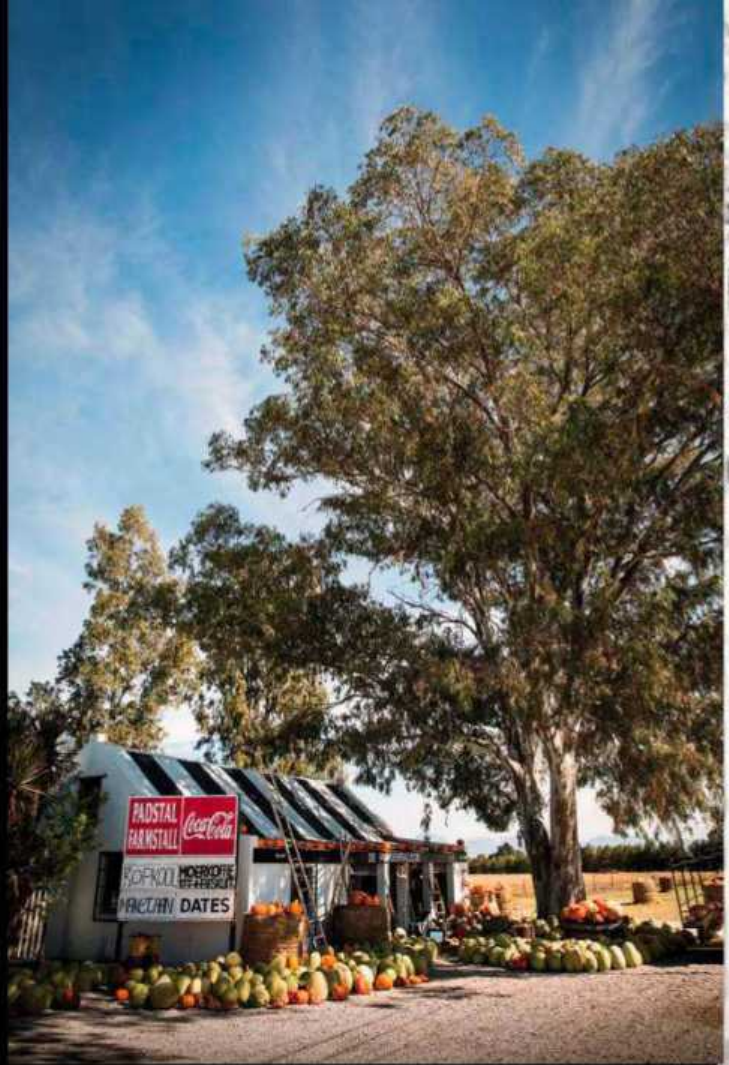
The road dips into the attractive spa town of Montagu, with its cottage gardens, fruit farms and tea shops. (Venturing into the Little Karoo often feels like time travel, as if its inhabitants were trying to counteract the duress of their environment by way of fine china and Victoria sponge.) This is the Robertson Wine Valley, an area as

famous as Stellenbosch for the quality of its terroir. My first stop is Mo and Rose, a sleek restaurant and small hotel set in a garden of giant cacti, run by a young German-Italian couple, Axel Daniel and Monika Schmalzl. Smart, tin-roofed outbuildings contain just eight rooms with a Scandi-African feel: beds are pale-wood four-posters, walls are whitewashed, floors are polished plaster, with added zip provided by striped rugs and colourful cushions. The star here is the bistro in the 1910 barn, where tables are set inside a glass-box extension and the vibe is contemporary without any attitude. Axel is an enthusiastic host, talking guests through the ambitious menu – pecan-nut soufflé with onion butter, Karoo-style ravioli with lamb and feta – and takes pride in the wine list, recommending local vineyards including Kleinkloof, Kranskop and Arendsig: unfamiliar names but staggeringly delicious wines. I scribble them down as if I were being given secret wartime codes.

I travel east, past the Langeberg mountains hulking the horizon like

Above from left: Mo and Rose hotel; zebras at Sanbona. Opposite, a white rhino at the reserve. Previous pages, a farm road in the Little Karoo





A farm worker's house. *Opposite, from top left:* a copper bath at Bobbejaansberg house; a farm stall; desert cacti, aloes and dry earth; the Swartberg Pass

bouncers at a party, past a church service conducted outside in the scrub, the congregation draped in spotless white robes. (The collective noun for a group of larks comes to mind: an exaltation.) We reach Sanbona by lunchtime, a private wildlife reserve almost the size of Singapore. For first timers or those who want safari within easy range of the city, Sanbona is a treat. This is not Botswana, there are relatively few animals for the size of the place – not quite needles in a haystack, but the guides have their work cut out – yet in the space of two days we count off the Big Five. The gradual reintroduction of tawny and white lion, rhino, cheetah, elephant and antelope to this undulating landscape of dry riverbeds and

succulent scrub means that resident scientists can monitor the balance between habitat and wildlife.

My base is Dwyka Tented Camp, a half-circle of suites under canvas renovated in September 2014, with new decking and private hot tubs. The camp sits below an amphitheatre of rock, where black eagles and baboons visit daily. My trim tent has a leather-tiled seating nook, concrete floors, an outdoor shower and the sound of doves canoodling under the eaves. On drives, the game restrictions bring unexpected advantages: we can jump out of the vehicle to track elephants on foot or seek out a family of cheetahs napping under an acacia without having to worry about becoming lunch for a passing lion. The big cats wear monitoring collars here, but on territory this vast the intrusion of technology is worth it. One morning we watch a pair of white lions walking through the sunrise, their pale fur radiating a halo of light.

Nearby Barrydale is a country *dorp* (town) of scruffy charm, as epitomised by lunch at Diesel and Crème, a roadside diner serving burgers and milkshakes in a junkyard aesthetic of neon signage, rusting petrol pumps and shining Harley Davidsons. The word kooky frequently pops up in conversation about Barrydale, but art plays a meaningful role here. A few doors from Diesel and Crème is Barrydale Hand Weavers, a project for skills and job creation that employs local people to make tablecloths and blankets in chic stripes and natural colours to be sold in the adjacent store. Then there's the showroom of design studio Magpie Art Collective, where rococo chandeliers are created from bottle tops and coloured plastic, sourced from rubbish dumps. Such is its far-reaching success that two of its chandeliers hang in the White House. Shane Petzer, a member, tells me: 'Repurposing things is an essential part of Southern African

ONE MORNING WE
WATCH WHITE LIONS
WALKING THROUGH
THE SUNRISE, THEIR
PALE FUR RADIATING
A HALO OF LIGHT





culture.' In the Little Karoo, making a virtue of limitation is an art form.

I am staying at Bobbejaansberg, a dream of a house sitting in splendid isolation at the foot of the Lemoenshoek mountains, the sight of which forms a backdrop to the many terraces, walkways and panoramic windows of this lateral, low-slung stone cottage. Up to eight people can rent the property for a week or a weekend – though one woman came alone, cancelled all her other plans for the fortnight and stayed put. It's that sort of place: just you and nature, the peak ahead, the vale behind, the movement of light on the far hills, the silence and the night stars. The interiors are the work of designer Gregory Mellor, the effect is one of space and comfort. Linen sofas, wicker chairs, brass bathtubs and rugs echo the colour of the surrounding fynbos, where olive and sage green and the occasional burst of pale yellow – as emphatic as a blonde in a room full of brunettes – are the governing tones. There's a pizza oven, a lap pool bordered by lavender and a million places to sit in cushiony bliss.

At Touwsberg, a private game and nature reserve near Ladismith

where a fortunate few have made weekend and holiday homes, I startle a pair of ostrich as I bump along the track to Stoney Cottage. This solar-powered, four-bedroom retreat – the creation of Lynn and Sibley McAdam, owners of Cape Town interiors shop Block and Chisel – sits above a stream in the crease of a steep valley. Clad in stone, the stylish house blends with the mountains and surrounding bush, a protected wilderness where guests can hike and bike, swim in rivers and even game watch, as zebra, kudu, oryx and giraffe roam the reserve. Here, the animals come to you: as the sun slides behind the Wolverfontein peaks I watch a red hartebeest pad down the hill to drink in the stream. It's a panorama best enjoyed from the shaded deck, preferably while supper cooks on the braai, and you're feeling pink and squeaky clean from a bath taken in the outdoor tub. The furnishings are a stylish Provençal-Karoo mash-up: pillowy beds, kilim textiles, antique dressers and sun-bleached animal bones. The only sound is running water and wind.

River View Cottages, outside Calitzdorp, is a country idyll of three

Above, a vista from River View Cottages; a desert succulent. *Opposite*, a bedroom at Boesmanskop

minimally furnished self-catering houses, each with a shaded, hammock-hung *stoep* and wood burner for winter, and a larger converted schoolhouse for families. This is the Huckleberry Finn dream of Colin and Bronwyn Lumb, a preposterously handsome Cape Town couple – he's a former lecturer in philosophy, she's a graphic designer and ex-model – who, 14 years ago, decided to abandon city life. Trailed by her two sons and Jock the Jack Russell, Bronwyn comes to say hello while I am sitting with the room fan blowing into my face, trying to cool down. She's sympathetic: 'I always say guests should go and jump in the river the moment they arrive.' The clay-green Gamka River, winding through the valley below, certainly looks inviting. It's safe to swim in, she says, and there are kayaks and

THE ROUTE UNSPOOLS
ACROSS THE HEART
OF THIS PLACE, RISING
AND FALLING THROUGH
THE HILLS AND VALLEYS
LIKE A CARDIOGRAM





paddleboards and a private pebble beach. I heed her advice and spend the afternoon sunbathing and splashing in the deliciously cool water. As I cook dinner later it dawns on me that this place – and the Little Karoo itself – is an exercise in paring back to essentials. Turns out, what you need is not Wi-Fi or air-con, but beauty, nature, a couple of friendly dogs to lope alongside you on walks, a glorious kayak ride into the heart of the valley and a bookcase full of Raymond Carver.

THE DRY, DUSTY TOWN of Calitzdorp is, on first glance, not much to look at. But turning down the back streets, I discover gallery cafés and spruce wineries such as Calitzdorp Cellar (good Merlot) and port-makers Boplaas. Peter Bayly's boutique vineyard on the Groenfontein Road, where a sweet white port tastes as fine as pudding wine, is enough of a reason to get into the surrounding countryside. As is Cape Town potter Clementina van der Walt's nearby Kraaldoring Gallery, where her nature-inspired vases are exhibited. It seems a way with clay is endemic here; internationally lauded ceramicist Hylton Nel is a long-time Calitzdorp resident. We spy his painted, playful plates that evening over an expert four-course dinner of fillet steak and strawberry pavlova at Boesmanskop, a three-bedroom guesthouse run by Tinie Bekker.

Reached down a bone-jangling road that winds through the Jurassic landscape of the Red Hills, Boesmanskop dates from 1759 when Bekker's forefathers established a farm in the fertile Kruisrivier valley. The family still rears dairy cows, vines and ostrich, but the house has an antique elegance that belies its rustic purpose. Bekker is a collector and a man of taste. My bedroom has a distinctly French elegance in its plaster walls, faded Persian rug and wingback chair. In the main building, with its vine-shaded terrace for breakfast, the refined drawing room is furnished with zebra-skin rugs, Regency chairs and a Boer camp-bed serving as a coffee table.

For a sense of Little Karoo life, I drop by the nearby gallery of

photographer Roger Young. His monochromatic pictures, supported by wonderful anecdotes, capture the feeling of the place: isolation expressed in a moonscape of hills, in a lonely windmill, in the lined features of the characters that populate this landscape. 'The word Karoo is derived from the Khoikhoi for dry and hard,' he reminds me.

The definition seems apt when the following day I drive the Swartberg Pass to Prince Albert. This 27km mountain road is one of the most spectacular in the world, a series of endless switchbacks carved through a crown of peaks that drops into a steep-sided, sandstone riverbed, and leads to the manicured frontier town of Prince Albert at the edge of the Great Karoo. I am spending the night at the Prince Albert Country Stay. Attached to a café and antiques store, charming rooms in dinky outbuildings are furnished with brass bedsteads and rose-print cushions and face onto a small pool. 'It takes time for people to understand what Prince Albert is all about,' says the owner, Coleen Penfold.

There's certainly something alternative about this 250-year-old town where art galleries outnumber farm shops and gardens are filled with scrapyards sculpture. There's a superb curry house/yoga studio (Simply Saffron) and a thriving annual art festival, run by gallery owner Brent Phillips. What is it about artists and the Little Karoo? 'Well, it's cheaper to live in the country

TURNS OUT WHAT YOU NEED ISN'T WI-FI, BUT NATURE, A COUPLE OF FRIENDLY DOGS AND A BOOKCASE FULL OF RAYMOND CARVER

than the city,' Phillips says. 'There's also something about the light here, the immensity of the landscape.' Jackie Burger, the former editor of *Elle South Africa* and a Prince Albert homeowner, credits the 'painterly skies at dawn and dusk, the stars bright against an expansive night sky'. (At the very least the place makes poets of its residents.)

At sunrise the next morning I climb the *koppie* (hill) behind the town. Shafts of dawn light creep over the Swartberg range, falling upon Prince Albert's fig farms and olive groves, the tin cottage roofs, the proud silhouette of the church bell tower. Beyond the boundaries of the town, all signs of civilisation tail off as the wilderness reasserts itself into empty plains and monumental hills: an equation of space to sky that invites existential shivers. It's a scene emblematic of the Little Karoo: a pioneer place of true grit and hard living counteracted by havens of verdant beauty. Cocks crow, dogs bark and a cool wind rushes towards me. I watch until the light coalesces into brightness, and then I walk down for breakfast, my edges gathered safely in.

Opposite, from top:
 a cheetah in the
 scrub; Diesel and
 Crème diner;
 an outdoor bath at
 Stoney Cottage





MIRROR MIRROR

**BROOKLYN-BASED IDENTICAL TWINS THE QUANN SISTERS
BOOM BLAST THOSE WALLFLOWERS OUT OF THE GARDEN**

STYLED BY PEGGY SCHULLER. PHOTOGRAPHED BY KRISTIAN SCHULLER



The Quann sisters were shot at **The Parker Hotel Palm Springs**, California. TK (left) wears print coat, POA, **Mary Katrantzou** (www.marykatrantzou.com). Suede trim top, £1,695, **Bally** (www.bally.co.uk). Patent lambskin trousers, £4,615, **Chanel** (www.chanel.com). Stack-heel Moira sandals, £575, **Jimmy Choo** (www.jimmychoo.com). Resin disc necklace, £120, **Pebble** (www.pebblelondon.com). Jungle bangle, £522, **Hermès** (uk.hermes.com). Metal Cocca clutch, £995, **Paula Cademartori** (www.paulacademartori.com).

Cipriana wears jumpsuit, £2,109, **Ace & Jig** (www.covetandlou.com). Purple cotton dress, £995; yellow cotton skirt, £795, both **Issey Miyake** (www.isseymiyake.com). Heavy-knit cardigan, £450, **SportMax** (www.matches.com). Leather boots, £595, **Gianvito Rossi for Mary Katrantzou** (as before). Earrings, stylist's own. Gold-plated braid cuff, £1,000, **Jennifer Fisher** (www.liberty.co.uk). Some Like It Hot clutch, £550, **Yazbukey** (www.yazbukey.com).



Cipriana wears shaggy wool-blend coat, £3,950, **Ralph Lauren Collection** (www.ralphlauren.co.uk). Knitted cape (worn underneath), £331, **Harare** (www.saltresortwear.com). Pleated crêpe skirt, £522, **Barbara Casasola** (www.net-a-porter.com). Brown and gold cuffs, from £188; gold choker, £357, all **Etro** (www.etro.com). Gold multi-chain Maasai necklace, £750, **Bex Rox** (www.bexrox.com). Feather 'chicken' bag (on croquet set), POA, **Ulyana Sergeenko** (moscow@ulyanasergeenko.com)



TK (left) wears wool cape, £525; wool and silk skirt, £5,725, both **Salvatore Ferragamo** (www.ferragamo.com). Beaded metal and crystal necklaces, from £486, **Kirsty Ward** (www.youngbritishdesigners.com). Leopard-print strappy sandals, £665, **Rupert Sanderson** (www.rupertsanderson.com). Espey Merde bag, £417, **Kotur** (www.koturltd.com). Red and black stole (in hair), £525, **Issey Miyake** (www.isseymiyake.com).

Cipriana wears long-sleeved striped top, £525, **Salvatore Ferragamo** (as before). Space-dye culottes, £290, **House of Holland** (www.houseofholland.co.uk). Leather and beaded belt (worn as necklace), £337, **Kirsty Ward** (as before). Suede sandals, £540, **Emilio Pucci** (www.emiliopucci.com). Suede Crisp Packet bag, £1,100, **Any Hindmarch** (www.anyahindmarch.com).





TK (left) wears patterned coat, £3,260, **Gucci** (www.gucci.com). Knitted sleeveless top, £749; navy trousers, £985, both **Celine** (+44 20 7491 8200). Striped wool-twill cape, £800, **Kenzo** (www.kenzo.com). Jupin loafers, £370, **Robert Clergerie** (www.robertclergerie.com). Brown and gold cuffs, from £188; bracelet, £342, all **Etro** (www.etro.com). Flower-pattern sunglasses, £215, **Matthew Williamson for Linda Farrow** (www.lindafarrow.com).

Cipriana wears flower-print chiffon dress, £1,345, **Kenzo** (www.kenzo.com). Cotton-and-wool print jacket, £1,600, **Marni** (www.marni.com). Silk trousers, £219, **Aloe** (www.aloelounge.com). Leather and fur loafers, £650, **Gucci** (www.gucci.com). Leopard bangles, from £297, **Hermès** (uk.hermes.com). Gold three-hoop necklace, £85, **Pichulik** (www.pichulik.com). Wooden sunglasses, £325, **Prada** (www.davidclulow.com).



TK (left) wears felt cape, £1,300, **Mulberry** (www.mulberry.com). Angle sandals, £440, **Robert Clergerie** (www.wearevillage.com). Gold-plated chain cuff, £280, **Arme de L'Amour** (www.net-a-porter.com). Dior So Real sunglasses, £340, **Christian Dior** (www.dior.com).


Cipriana wears Hatti felt skirt, £590, **Mulberry** (www.mulberry.com). Top, stylist's own. Tan sandals with gold heel, £2,765, **Salvatore Ferragamo** (www.ferragamo.com). Acetate sunglasses, £105, **Marc by Marc Jacobs** (www.marcjacobs.com). Horn cuff with gold chains, £325, **Bex Rox** (www.bexrox.com). Rope necklace, £40, **Pichulik** (www.pichulik.com).



TK (left) wears quilted toile jacket, £13,750, **Chanel** (www.chanel.com). Sari-wrapped bangles, from £15, **Pebble** (www.pebble.london.com). Earrings, stylist's own.

Cipriana wears curly sheepskin coat, £1,700, **Coach** (uk.coach.com). Rope necklace, £360, **En Inde** (www.eninde.com). Horn chain necklace, £620, **Bex Rox** (www.bexrox.com)





TK wears embroidered graphic dress, £3,050; Solaris jewel belt, £1,700, both **Louis Vuitton** (www.louisvuitton.com).

Opposite, Cipriana (left) wears curaçao-blue turtleneck tunic, POA, **Hermès** (uk.hermes.com). Crystal earrings, £38, **Pichulik** (www.pichulik.com). Sari-wrapped bangles, from £15; purple and gold bangle, £30; both **Pebble** (www.pebble.london.com). Jungle bangle, £279, **Hermès** (as before).

TK wears Give Way jacket, POA, **Anya Hindmarch** (www.anyahindmarch.com). Ball earrings, £20, **Pichulik** (as before). Gold multi-chain Maasai necklace, £750, **Bex Rox** (www.bexrox.com). Mini Clemence necklace, £70, **The Collective Boutique** (www.collectiveboutique.co.uk). Fabric cuff, £45, **Pebble** (as before). Cable bracelets, stylist's own

Cipriana (left) wears suede trench coat, £6,960, **Tod's** (www.tods.com). Gold cosmic earrings, £290, **Coco's Liberty** (www.cocosliberty.com). Gold hoop necklace, £85, **Pichulik** (www.pichulik.com). Flower-pattern sunglasses, £215, **Matthew Williamson for Linda Farrow** (www.lindafarrow.com).

TK wears patterned coat, £2,295, **Miu Miu** (www.miumiu.com). Gold choker, £357, **Etro** (www.etro.com). Metal and stone choker, £360, **Marni** (www.marni.com). Leopard-print sunglasses, £150, **House of Holland** (www.houseofholland.co.uk). Chain earrings, £170, **Arme de L'Amour** (www.net-a-porter.com).

Make-up: **Sophie Haig**

Models: **Cipriana Quann and TK Quann**

Fashion coordinator: **Vicki Wright**

Shot at **The Parker Hotel Palm Springs, California** (www.theparkerpalmsprings.com; doubles from about £250)







Some Greek islands like to bask in the limelight.



Others prefer to lie low and make their own waves

By Lindsay Talbot. Photographs by Gabriela Herman



From left: in the garden at Yria, a secluded hotel on Paros; on the coast of Pano Koufonisi, a small and relaxed island south-east of Naxos; Yria

SINCE BIRTH I have been an islo-maniac, but I am a picky one. My islands need to have all the right proportions. I like them rugged and remote. They shouldn't try too hard, but they should have enough to keep you from growing bored. The first time I visited the 220-island-strong Cyclades – the most frequented and most famous of the Greek archipelago's seven island groups – I traced the tourist's trilogy of Mykonos, Delos and Santorini, spending a few nights among the crowded bars and beaches of Mykonos; a day walking around the sacred ruins of Delos; and another few lounging by the infinity pool that overlooks the caldera and the dizzying jumble of cliffs on Santorini. All three were islands whose charms, I found, revealed themselves rather quickly – and perhaps a bit too generously.

But in 2008, I made my first trip to the lesser-known central Cyclades, including Paros, Antiparos, Naxos and Pano Koufonisi. Here were islets that surrendered themselves much more

slowly. There were hardly any smart shops, boisterous restaurants or nightclubs – and yet there seemed to be no end of whitewashed hillside towns and hidden swimming caves to discover and explore. Each is a bather's paradise; I have now been to about 30 beaches on Paros alone. They come in endless varieties: on the northern tip of the island there's Kolymbithres, famous for bizarre rock formations rubbed so smooth by the sand that they're almost lunar; or the windsurfing haven at Chrissi Akti on the south-eastern side, where kiteboarders' colourful sails fly across the sky in arching swoops. Many have bamboo-thatched umbrellas, little chapels and sleepy tavernas where roasting spits of souvlaki slowly pirouette.

Like its neighbours, Paros has never been entirely dependent on tourism: while its ports draw summer crowds, it's largely been the protectorate of a population of European families and expats who maintain holiday homes outside its four

Old men play backgammon under ancient oak trees, while the



hotel's pared-back living room; the harbour at Pano Koufonisi. *Previous pages*, Naoussa, a sleepy fishing village on the northern tip of Paros

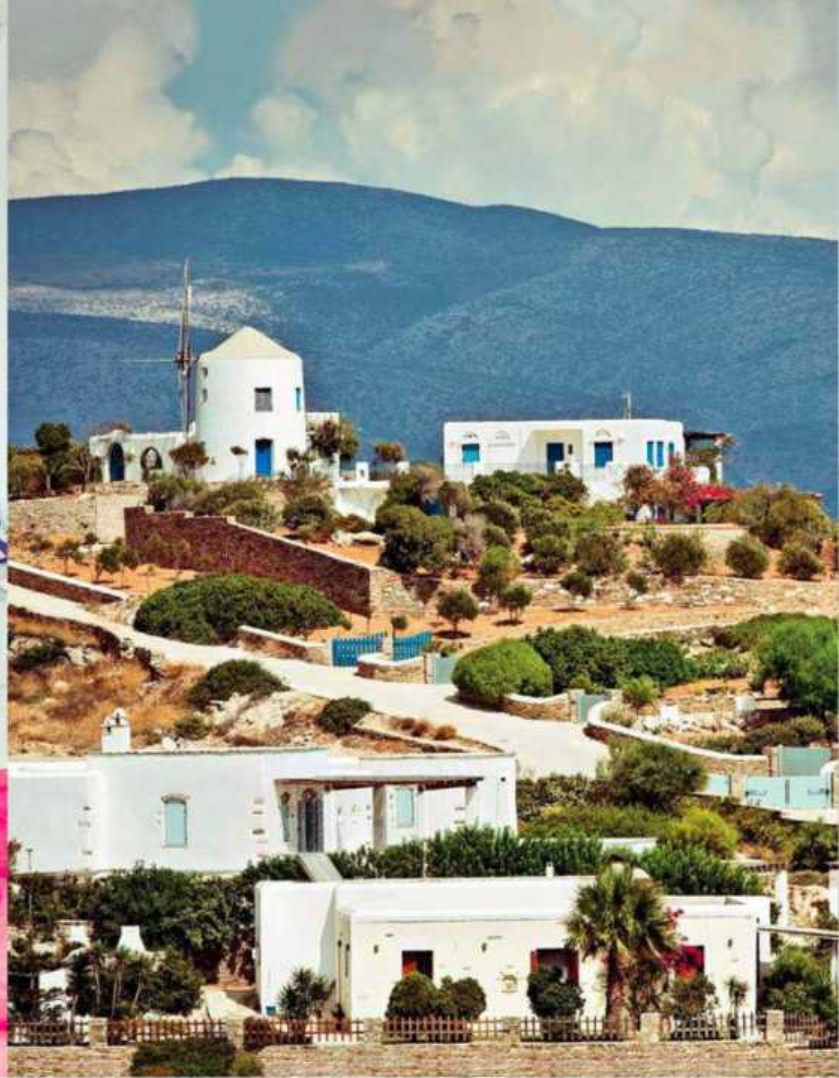
main villages – Naoussa, Parikia, Lefkes and Marpissa. There are mostly just bed-and-breakfasts on the island, and a stately hotel or two dotting each end. But recently a handful of boutique arrivals – such as the Greek-owned Beach House on nearby Antiparos, which opened last summer – along with a flashier kind of visitor (Tom Hanks, Madonna) are shining the spotlight on these central Cycladic isles. The fashion set have even been trading Patmos (an airportless island in the north Dodecanese that is an eight-hour trip from Athens by ferry) for Antiparos (which can be reached by ferry in about four hours from Athens or 30 minutes from Paros airport).

In fact, it seems that tiny Antiparos is becoming the new Patmos in that it's the *anti*-Patmos; while Patmos in August has the distinct see-and-be-seen social whirl of Paris fashion week – an exhausting, ceaseless scene, teeming with It girls (self-anointed or not) and interior and fashion designers –

Antiparos is a place for those who seek and require no society but their own. On this small island old men sit beneath ancient oak trees playing backgammon, while the hippies who washed up here in the 1970s still run nudist camps. Though you might bump into Bruce Springsteen at The Doors, a local bar where the owner gives free ouzo to anyone who can sing all the lyrics of Bob Dylan's 'Hurricane', you'll otherwise be left alone. And in summertime in Greece, that is the rarest, most precious thing of all.

And yet for all the rediscovery, the truth is that these isles have been drawing writers and artists seeking escape for centuries. In the early 19th century Lord Byron inscribed his signature in a cave at the southern end of Antiparos, a place where millennia-old stalactites and stalagmites spiral, corkscrew-like, into the darkness. Truman Capote, having just finished *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, spent the summer of 1958 on Paros. Throughout his long stay in Parikia, he worked on the

hippies who washed up here in the 1970s still run nudist camps



From left: the living room at the Beach House hotel on Antiparos, a small island in the southern Aegean west of Paros; whitewashed houses on

text for Richard Avedon's *Observations*, the photographer's first collection of portraits, and read Proust and Chandler. He also began writing *Answered Prayers*, his final – and famously unfinished – novel.

Even today, it is easy to imagine how Capote must have found here a refuge from all the things which by that point had come to define and, equally, oppress him: New York society, the literary world, and even his own persona. On Paros, there was none of that – there was only sun, sea and serenity. 'We have not seen a newspaper since we arrived on the island,' wrote photographer Cecil Beaton while staying with Capote at the Meltemi Hotel in Parikia. 'We have lived in a timeless haze of repetition. Life is nothing but sleep, swim, eat and read. One day merges soothingly into another without incident. Each day is a pattern.'

And like Beaton's, my days on Paros – a week or two almost every August for the past eight years – are also a pattern. I find

myself immediately in the island's lull, falling into its idle routine. Its alchemy is restorative, cathartic, elemental – swimming every day in the sea, driving through the amber pastures of arid farmlands, eating the same simple Greek dishes you find at every little taverna. Time slows down, as if running counterclockwise.

Toward the end of my stay, I always make a day-trip to the Caribbean-blue waters around Pano Koufonisi – a small island just off Naxos that's so undeveloped it may have been what Paros looked like when Capote and Beaton visited. Its low coastline looks almost porous – so pocked with natural pools and cavernous cliffs that it resembles a slice of Swiss cheese.

But the rest of my time is spent on Paros, and whenever I return I notice, as if for the first time, how in the rosy satin dusk everything is electrified by the white candescence of the sinking Mediterranean sun; I watch the town's domed churches,

While staying with Truman Capote on the island, Cecil Beaton




the island; Greek salad and freshly caught sardines at the Captain Pipinos taverna on Antiparos; a bedroom at the Beach House hotel

Frankish castles and Venetian palaces gild in the late-afternoon light. The island burns on like a piece of Murano glass.

On the final day of my trip each year, I sit in a spectacular cove at the foot of a plunging ravine, one flanked by windswept olive trees that look like they belong in a Dr Seuss storybook. In the distance is a funky campground with tie-dyed tents, neon-bright dune buggies, and a pirate flag flapping in the breeze. The beach is wide and, but for one family, deserted. There are no umbrellas or sun loungers, just a stretch of pale smooth stones, palm trees and turquoise waters. A small taverna sits above the shore, its terrace shaded by grapevines. Plates of vivid-red stuffed tomatoes and clouds of feta mixed with olives and onion cover the rickety little tables, while octopus dries outside in glass display cases. The restaurant is run by an old sea captain with a mop of yellowed curls weathered by the sun and salty air. He wears a navy-blue wool sailor's cap and could pass for a Homeric sea god. A donkey roams on a hill in the

distance and the outline of a motorised skiff from Antiparos starts to appear. When lunch arrives, I begin talking to a sun-kissed Englishman who used to work in publishing. I ask him how long he's been here. 'Ten years ago I came over for a week to clear my head,' he says. 'I never left.'

I realise then that it's time for me to pack up – before the island captures me as well. 

Getting there

Beach House Antiparos (www.beachhouseantiparos.com) has doubles from about £165. British Airways (www.britishairways.com) flies from Heathrow to Mykonos, where you can take a ferry to Paros and on to Antiparos. For further information contact the Greek National Tourism Organisation (+44 20 7495 9300; www.visitgreece.gr)

wrote, 'Life is nothing but sleep, swim, eat and read'

The Provençal-style garden at Waterlock House near Canterbury; *opposite*, stairs leading to the B&B apartment, above an antiques shop



A photograph of a rustic interior. On the left, a white brick wall features a mounted deer head with large, dark antlers. Below the head is a small, oval window with a decorative, light-colored frame. To the right of the wall, a wooden staircase with a dark metal railing leads upwards. The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams, and a wooden sign with the words "YOUR HEAD" is visible. The overall atmosphere is warm and eclectic.

MOVE ON UP

British B&Bs used to be a national joke. Then a few started sharpening their act and their attitude, and the rest followed. Now a new breed are taking it to the next level, ditching the Roberts radios, feature walls and cheery word art, and mixing esoteric design with local upcycling to create highly individual places to stay



THE READING ROOMS, MARGATE

One of England's oldest seaside towns, Margate has long been associated with bucket-and-spade day trippers. But driven by the opening of the Turner Contemporary four years ago, independent galleries, vintage homeware shops and pretty cafés have been popping up ever since.

Ahead of the trend were Louise and Liam Nabb, who bought this five-storey Georgian townhouse (then split into 10 bedsits) on tree-lined Hawley Square when relocating from Hackney in 2007. The name evokes Margate's heyday – before the arcade-slot-machine era – when public reading rooms kept wealthy Londoners (including Lord Nelson, Keats and Turner) entertained when they decamped here for the summer. The former graphic-design-and-DJ duo have restored floor-to-ceiling sash windows, exposed brick fireplaces and distressed slate-blue plasterwork, which is thought to date back to the 1760s. Now the top three floors are split into just three bedrooms in which whitewashed beams and parquet flooring are teamed with

Anglepoise lamps, ornate antique chandeliers and salvaged iron radiators. There is, of course, plenty of reading material, from Penguin paperbacks and coffee-table books on design and Margate's heritage, to stacks of *World of Interiors* magazines by the bedside tables. The top floor has a skyline sea view across the three-window-wide room and a bathroom so big it could host a morning yoga class. There is no mingling at The Reading Rooms: no bar, no reception area or formal check-in and, brilliantly, breakfast is served in the comfort of your room.

Just tick what you fancy from the menu the night before and specify a time. Louise and Liam will appear right on cue with an antique wooden tray laden with carrot and ginger juice and their speciality: toasted ciabatta topped with cream cheese, honey and cinnamon.

www.thereadingroomsmargate.co.uk. Doubles from £160

NUMBER 38, BRISTOL

It's hard to beat the location of this double-fronted Georgian 18th-century merchant's house a short stroll from Bristol Zoo, Clifton Village (brilliant for shopping) and the Lido. Mitch Tonks' The Spiny Lobster restaurant is a three-minute walk away; a few doors down the Berlin-style speakeasy Hausbar is the spot for an expertly mixed, late-night Mojito. It's just one of the many on-the-money tip-offs from the knowledgeable staff at Number 38, which was opened by brothers Michael and Adam Dorrien Smith four years ago (their family also owns Tresco in the Isles of Scilly). Adam is behind the design of the nine individual rooms, the best of which are the double-height West Loft and East Loft suites on the top floor. The first is more masculine with wood-panelled walls, painted in deeply calming Hague Blue, which cleverly separate the adjoining bathroom and the copper freestanding bath (East Loft is lighter and brighter with a coat of Lamp Room Grey). Sisal carpets, ceiling fans and colonial shutters give it a relaxed New England vibe and the green open spaces of Durdham Downs are framed like artworks in the windows. Views can also be had from the sheltered, south-facing rooftop terrace, which has been primped up with pots of colourful Mediterranean flowers from Tresco's tropical gardens. Breakfast, served at round mahogany and iron tables in the open-plan living/dining room, should please even the fussiest eaters: fresh pressed juices and flaky croissants, sausages from nearby butchers Ruby & White, perfect poached eggs and the sweetest mini plum tomatoes. Save room for the spiced black pudding – it's a revelation. www.number38clifton.com. Doubles from £110



THE POST HOUSE, CHEWTON MENDIP

Once the post office and bakery for the local village and part of the Waldegrave Estate, this Grade II-listed, 400-year-old building was bought by Karen and John Price in 2005. Karen has plenty of experience in renovating and restoring properties (her most recent project is The Townhouse in Bath which opened last year as an exclusive-use rental for up to eight people) and it's obvious in her elegant French-country-style interiors. Downstairs, thick lime plaster walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Old White and Clunch, there are original flagstone floors and low wooden beams, a huge 1950s poster for engine oil propped up against the wall and clusters of oversize glass vases. Through the wooden stable door and up the stairs, the choice is between the cosy Blue Room in the eaves, which has a bath at the end of the bed, or the bigger Suite with its own sitting room and a bathroom with a clawfoot, roll-top number (there's also The Old Bakery, a one-bedroom apartment with a fully equipped kitchen, living room and private terrace). Thoughtful, homely touches are evident everywhere: a little jug of orange lilies on an oak table; all-butter biscuits baked that morning in a kilner jar on a dresser. Monty, a tail-wagging, wire-haired Jack Russell, is usually on meet-and-greet duty at the door. Breakfast – the full English if you'd like, with eggs and tomatoes supplied by a gentleman in the village and sausages from Walter Rose Butchers in Trowbridge – is served either by a crackling log fire or outside in the courtyard if the sun shines. Popular with walkers wanting to stride out over the Mendip hills, Chewton Mendip is also perfectly positioned for days out at Cheddar Gorge and the glorious cathedral city of Wells. www.theposthousebandb.co.uk. Doubles from £80





BERDOULAT, BATH

No doubt there's a whole gang of other B&Bs set in former Masonic digs and rustling up fresh Turkish mezze for breakfast, but if so they're keeping pretty quiet. This singularly individual household belongs to Patrick Williams and his Istanbul-born wife Neri; Patrick counts William Morris and Lutyens among his heroes and restored his last home, above a Stepney pub, using skipfuls of salvaged treasure. He likes history without the creakiness, and the patina that ageing brings. At 5 Pierrepont Place – a townhouse built by Bath's ringmaster architect, John Wood the Elder – the air is heady with the scent of vintage wood and the centrepiece kitchen, garlanded by crimped *monte et baisse* pendants, is as dimly lit and textured as a Vermeer still life. Both personal and architectural pasts are on display, from Patrick's Victorian high chair (he's not that old) to the building's vellum deeds, collected in a huge frame by the front door. In the library upstairs is a thrillingly large collection of Penguins, a rare flirtation with modernity; downstairs are the two suites. In the bathroom of the biggest, a statue of the Madonna and Child avert their eyes and ghostly organ chords from the chapel next door may cause a Gothic shiver, despite the underfloor heating. The other has a huge stone hearth and a book-binding press bearing tea cups (boiling water and fresh milk are placed outside in the morning). The B&B is two minutes' walk from the station and a toga flick from the Roman baths. Over palate-wakening dishes of melon, tomato-and-pomegranate salad and flaky *börek* (there's also a meatier Somerset option), Neri will point you to lesser-known landmarks such as the Gin Shop on Queen Street and Menu Gordon Jones for some seriously outré cooking. www.berdoulatandbreakfast.co.uk. Doubles from £150

TREVOSE HARBOUR HOUSE, ST IVES

This whitewashed 1850s mid-terrace house in artsy St Ives is as refreshing as the breeze that blows gently through its harbour-facing windows. Painstakingly transformed from a fusty B&B in a 15-month project by owners Angela and Olivier Noverraz (who met at Switzerland's prestigious Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne, speak six languages between them, and have worked in some of Europe's top hotels), it's now a dazzle of bright-white and sea blues, mid-century Ercol chairs and tables, and not a shell-print in sight. No detail has been overlooked, from the stamped silverware keyrings to the placement of the plug sockets. Each of the six rooms offers a slightly different spritz of the same palette

(even the specially commissioned artworks by local artists are colour-coordinated) but all feature handpicked second-hand furniture, sink-in Hypnos beds and zesty Neal's Yard potions. From here you can explore the galleries in St Ives, stroll the craggy Coast Path or delve deeper into Cornwall (most of the county's highlights – Eden, Padstow, Heligan – are within an hour's drive). The top-floor suite, which has a bath beneath a huge skylight for a good soak under the stars, is the ultimate retreat; equally romantic is the Terrace Deluxe annexe at the back, which still steals lovely harbour views. Downstairs there's a snug with a log fire and a deep-blue sofa for cosying up with an aperitivo from the honesty bar in winter, and a small, suntrap terrace for summer.

These spaces are where breakfast happens too. Everything is either homemade (bircher muesli) or organic (bread and pastries). There are daily changing smoothie shots and proper machine-brewed espressos while hot options run from traditional eggs and bacon to potato scones with Penryn Smokehouse salmon. www.trevosehouse.co.uk. Doubles from £140



PHOTOGRAPHS: EMMA CASE; MARTE MARIE FORSBERG

THE LINEN SHED, NEAR FAVERSHAM

Unashamedly romantic is the only way to describe this dove-grey wooden house, framed with a wisteria-clad veranda, tucked high up off the road between grassy banks of wild flowers and higgledy-piggledy cottages in Boughton-under-Blean, Kent. All three bedrooms have their own quirky twist on owner Vickie Miles' inspired style. The Green Room (downstairs, along with the laundry room which wafts out the crisp scent of freshly pressed linen) has a roll-top bath; there's a wall of vintage 1950s mirrors in The Bird Room, and The French Room (the biggest) has a huge Empress bed, lace curtains and an upcycled cupboard to hide the television. The main upstairs living space has a rococo feel – a palette of pastel-painted wall panels, exposed floorboards and rattan armchairs – with a zinc-topped table and Singer sewing-machine chairs in the kitchen at the far end. Breakfast is a feast, cooked whenever you want and using local produce (except for the salted butter which Vickie pops to France for twice a year). Start with natural yogurt and homemade compote (rhubarb with orange and ginger is especially delicious), followed by potato rosti, fried eggs and smoked bacon, or pancakes, all served on pretty, mismatched china. Some regular guests bring foodie gifts (one Canadian lady travels with two tins of maple syrup in her luggage); it also attracts over-nighting musicians (Paul Young has slept in The French Room). If a few days here makes you long to run home and redecorate immediately, Vickie will happily draw up a map of the best antiques shops and dealers in Faversham to get the ball rolling. www.thelinenshed.com. Doubles from £85





THE LAINDONS, HASTINGS

Right on the high street, in the heart of Hastings Old Town, this Grade II-listed former coach house was bought by Sara and Jon Young last year after a stint living in Stockholm (working for Design Hotels and as a product designer, respectively). The pair have swept a light,

Scandinavian touch through the building. Breakfast is served at weathered oak tables in the grey floor-tiled conservatory, attached to the living room, which has views of pretty East Hill park. The full English is fantastic, the attention to detail spot on. Bread is home-baked and still warm from the oven. There are hand-carved wooden spoons for dishing out dollops of thick-cut Seville orange marmalade and Sunberry jam (a blackberry and raspberry cross) by Battle-based Martha & Ed's Kitchen. And Jon brews coffee from beans that are roasted and sold in No.23, his new coffee shop out front. The five bedrooms all share the same understated livery of calming coastal-inspired colours.

Some have grey and white wallpaper with fat, vertical pinstripes, original fireplaces and shuttered sash windows; room five comes with a freestanding bath and a window seat big enough for two, perfect for watching passers-by below (when you do want to venture out, head to Maggie's on Rock-A-Nore road for a tasty fish-and-chip supper).

On the walls there are seascape oil paintings, a pair of rowing oars and straw hats hooked over pegs; industrial fisherman pendant lights hang from the ceiling, decorative starfish and wooden seagulls perch on ledges. The bespoke beds with navy throws are made from recycled wood by award-winning craftsmen at the Hastings & Bexhill Wood Recycling Project; along with the 'Gull Ear Plugs' provided (the neighbourhood flocks are incredibly noisy) they guarantee a proper night's sleep. www.thelaindons.com. Doubles from £120

HANNAH'S, WINCHESTER

Last year, when 25-year-old Hannah McIntyre decided to put her singing career on hold and open a sophisticated city-central bed-and-breakfast, she plumped for a 19th-century former dancehall and livery stable, tucked into a tiny courtyard garden. The outer walls remain but she started from scratch inside, remodelling the space into three floors (an eye for interiors runs in the family: her mother owns nearby Jane McIntyre Design). Subtle scents of ginger and coriander root, due to the constantly burning Astier de Villatte candles, drift across an open-plan breakfast room (with a piano, should you feel like playing a few notes), and into an atmospheric sitting room with squashy sofas and a log-burner. The bedrooms are all upstairs (those in search of ultimate privacy book out all three and have the place to themselves). Careful, in such a functional building, not to overdo the reclamation, McIntyre has pulled off loft living with contemporary cosiness, and it's a real struggle to haul yourself out of the sublimely comfortable beds. Each room is double-height, too, with a wooden ladder-staircase to a mezzanine-level, bathroom with a skylight (scrub up with lashings of Hannah's fig-and-vanilla-scented products).

This is an ideal bolthole for weekenders in search of one-off independent shops, cathedral detours and cut-above dining – which, in Winchester, means booking ahead for tables at Rick Stein's eponymous restaurant or Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's River Cottage Canteen. www.hannahsbedandbreakfast.co.uk. Doubles from £185



WESTBROOK COURT, NEAR HAY-ON-WYE

It's a well-told tale: London couple on holiday in the countryside spot a for-sale sign on a tumble-down farm and turn in for a look... Here that couple are Australian Kari Morgan and her husband Chris, and the countryside is a particularly idyllic slice of the Wye Valley, 10 minutes' drive from bookish Hay. But instead of the usual rustic barn conversion, they've built a refreshingly sleek black-timber-clad annexe housing five suites.

The effect is more self-contained apartments than B&B, especially in four of the rooms (numbers 2 to 5), which have beds up on a mezzanine level. Kari retrained as an interior designer and her skills are on show here: trompe-l'oeil wallpaper of white-washed exposed brick against the minimal black four-poster give room 1 an urban loft vibe; a zingy, lime, mid-century-style sofa pops against a bookshelf print wall in room 5. All have local touches – apple crates (this is cider country) re-purposed as shelves and Welsh wool throws from Melin Tregwynt, as well as little decked terraces that catch the morning sun. During the week these are just the spot for breakfast, a delivered hamper brimming with hard-boiled eggs and fresh-baked pastries, little pots of fruit and yogurt. At weekends the Morgans open up their 17th-century oak-beamed farmhouse for a proper fry-up (sausages and bacon from Gibbons butchers in Hay; eggs with marigold orange yolks from the family's hens) eaten sat on Tolix chairs around a communal table where young city couples, outdoorsy families and retired walkers swap tips. Kari's on hand, too, for much more than just rounds of toast and coffee: out come maps of walks, Hay Festival programmes, and personal favourites and finds, depending on what direction the day looks like taking. www.westbrookcourtbandb.co.uk. Doubles from £85







WATERLOCK HOUSE, WINGHAM, NEAR CANTERBURY

Industrial iron planters, a set of blue-grey Italian café chairs and a stuffed rabbit in a magician's hat: this is the scene at decorative antiques shop Branching Out, owned by artist Sophie de Bouvier de Cachard, who also rents out the vast, beamed loft apartment above as a bed-and-breakfast. There's a tiny kitchenette on the first floor and a winding staircase up to the open-plan space in the eaves, which is divided into separate areas by white brick arches and has a wooden, chequerboard floor and distressed painted furniture. You could be in Paris, if it wasn't for the views of green fields from the windows of this former seed-merchant's premises. In the living room, a pair of Lloyd Loom rattan armchairs sit opposite an enormous cream sofa and a 1920s garden table refashioned as a writing desk. In the bedroom, a dress mannequin and a deconstructed Louis XVI wing armchair stand in opposite corners and there's a cosy, grey-and-white patchwork quilt on the bed. Wake to the sound of church bells ringing, just in time for breakfast (most of the ingredients come from the farm shop in the village) which is eaten either around a pine table in Sophie's home next door, or on the terrace of her gorgeous, Provençal-style garden with a central pond, olive trees and lavender. Historic Canterbury and seaside towns such as Whitstable and Margate are a short drive away. www.branchingoutwingham.co.uk. Doubles from £120



REVIEWS BY Sarah Baxter, Paula Ellis, Rick Jordan, Tabitha Joyce, Fiona Kerr, Emma Love, Karin Mueller, Francine Raymond, Sally Shalam, Pete Winterbottom

A TRAVELLER'S TALES



AROUND THE WORLD WITH LILY JAMES

After winning the hearts of blue bloods in *Cinderella* and *Downton Abbey*, the English rose will be slaying zombies as Miss Bennet in a new Jane Austen mash-up movie

Where have you just come back from?

I'm filming *War and Peace* in Lithuania at the moment but I have just returned from Qualia hotel on Hamilton Island in Australia. My boyfriend [actor Matt Smith] and I stayed in a beach hut, which was complete paradise. Every evening they would bring us a seafood platter and we ate lobster looking out at *Jurassic Park*-style views. One night, we had a 10-course meal. I didn't even know a 10-course meal was possible. I'd never been to Australia before, so I also did a whirlwind tour of Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth in a week. It was pretty intense.

Name a place that's lived up to the hype

Mexico City was cool. I loved the food there; all that fresh guaca.

Which is your favourite city, and why?

London. I'm constantly surprised by it, by how individual it is. It's really rare. I've moved around a lot: Peckham, East London and now I'm living north.

And your road most travelled?

I went to Tuscany when I was at drama school and did a theatre workshop in San Miniato. I'd skip lessons and go out into sunflower fields and just walk and walk and walk. I ate tomatoes like apples and it was so peaceful. I keep going back there.

Describe your favourite view

My front door when I come home from work. But I also love sunsets. There's something reaffirming about them, and they make me feel connected to the world in a positive way. I know that sounds really pretentious, but seeing the sun disappear into the sea makes me feel like everything's going to be OK.

What do you pack first?

Books. I had a Kindle, but I like it when books get wet by the pool and go all crinkly and smell of sun cream. I'm the worst packer in the world and my bag is

always too heavy, so at the desk I have to pull everything out and put it in my hand luggage and wear my heaviest shoes.

'I know this great little place...'

Bear + Wolf café in Tufnell Park. It has the best poached eggs, smoked salmon and avocado on toast in the whole of London and I pretty much go there every day. There are always lots of children running round, which can be quite interesting for me especially since the whole *Cinderella* thing happened.

Describe a childhood-holiday memory

Being round the swimming pool with my brothers. Even now it takes me a long time to get in a pool. I've got a big fear of the cold, and I remember my brothers always trying to push me in, or my dad doing imitations of me dipping a toe in...

'I ALWAYS PACK
A LOT OF BOOKS.
I LIKE IT WHEN THEY
GO ALL WET AND
CRINKLY BY THE
POOL AND SMELL
OF SUN CREAM'

First holiday without your parents?

I spent two weeks in Italy with a boyfriend camping and travelling around Venice, Rome, the Amalfi Coast. Although I get to stay in smart hotels now, I'd still somehow rather be camping on the Amalfi Coast.

'I lost my heart in...'

Kos, when I was 17, to lots of different Greek boys!

Who's the most interesting person you've encountered on your travels?

I befriended this tiny Italian man who didn't speak any English. Somehow I ended up helping him carry a harpsichord

from one side of Venice to the other. He took me to his home, into a courtyard filled with fairy lights and introduced me to his whole family.

Where have you felt happiest?

When I was about 11, my dad spent months planning a holiday to the Masai Mara in Kenya. We stayed at a lodge called Elsa's Kopje, which was brand new at the time, and went on all these safaris. It felt amazingly adventurous.

Ever taken anything from a hotel room?

I stole a pillow one time because my boyfriend told me they were the comfiest in the world. I can't tell you where it was from because I still feel bad!

What is your most-used foreign phrase?

At the moment, I say *Ačiū* [ah-choo] a lot, which is 'thank you' in Lithuanian. It's an amazing country, especially now the sun is shining and doesn't set until 10.30pm. There's also the Museum of Genocide Victims and the old KGB district, so there is a lot of potent history to explore.

Most regrettable holiday souvenir?

Way too much incense from India. It's *so* strong. And I love chai so I brought loads of it back, but it was just ordinary breakfast tea. That was disappointing.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Having a cold beer at breakfast on holiday.

Nominate your 8th wonder of the world

I went to Algonquin Provincial Park in Canada and stayed in a tiny wooden shack on a huge lake surrounded by forests and mountains. At night, the water was so still the stars reflected off it. I thought I was witnessing a meteor shower or something completely otherworldly.

Lily James was speaking to Francesca Babb. 'Cinderella' is released on DVD on 24 August

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PORTUGAL'S BEST HOTELS FOR CHILDREN

HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS

Not really – they're off having fun themselves. Truth is, many child-friendly places in this country are a bit rough and ready. But here Mary Lussiana has rootled out the cushy numbers

PRAIA VERDE CASTRO MARIM

There is a breezy, Mediterranean feel to this hotel, despite its proximity to the deep blue Atlantic. Surrounded by a sweet-smelling pine forest, with a path cutting through the trees to the beach, this is an untapped family hideaway. Staff are young and friendly; children don't need to be shushed, just scooped up and led to the playroom, where they're helped to make biscuits, or treated to popcorn at the night-time cinema. Interiors are simple and white, with wicker furniture and mosaic-tiled floors. The 40 suites have separate sitting rooms with sofa beds for kids and well-equipped kitchenettes to rustle up meals for fussy eaters. At A Terra restaurant, food follows the same relaxed vibe as the rest of the place: big salads to share, crispy pizzas straight out of the wood-fired oven and lots of local products from a corner of the Algarve forgotten by many.

+351 281 530600; www.praiaverderesort.com. Doubles from about £150

FAMILY



SUBLIME COMPORTA

The sugar-fine, bleached beaches of Comporta, empty as far as the eye can see, hold a particular charm, especially for the smartest Lisboaers for whom it has long been a private playground. Now that Sublime has opened among the sand dunes and emerald rice meadows, there is at last somewhere to stay that's as lovely as the surroundings. Its 14 white-on-white rooms and suites – perhaps not ideal for tiny sticky fingers, but great for slightly older children – are spread between two low-lying, ochre-coloured buildings guarded by the area's indigenous umbrella pine trees. The emphasis here is on authentic simplicity, a back-to-basics existence (albeit a chic one) with a pool to dip in, kayaks and bicycles to take out, surfing off the coast and vivid lizards to chase between the three types of peppermint in the chef's organic garden. Minutes down the road is Cavalos Na Areia, aristocrat Jose Ribeiro's riding school, a bucolic straw-filled stable of glossy horses and the odd donkey or two. Beginners can go for a slow morning hack alongside the lush paddy fields. Budding eventers can gallop at the water's edge at the end of the day as the sea rolls in and the sun sinks. Just as delicious are evenings at Sublime, when the fire pit roars into action and the local oysters are brought out. +351 269 449376; www.sublimecomporta.pt. Doubles from about £145

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS WISE



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VIDAGO PALACE VIDAGO

Built in 1910 for the king, who frequently came to take the waters at this natural spa in Portugal's far north, this grand palace has long outlived the monarchy for whom it was intended. New life has been breathed into it a century later, with rooms emerging clad in dazzling De Gournay hand-painted silk wallpapers, all cherry blossom and flowers, the bar lined with leather and the spectacular staircase topped by gilded ceilings. The Belle Epoque exterior in pretty-as-a-picture pink will make little girls' hearts race, while boys will love exploring the gardens, the caves and the lakes. Both will fall in love with Mirandês Figueiro, the hotel donkey. Thankfully for younger ones, food is more rustic than palatial with dishes such as *douradinhos* (fish fingers in disguise) and no one will bat an eyelid at requests for more sprinkles on the ice cream. The strikingly modern spa is an architectural anomaly designed by Pritzker-winning Alvaro Siza Vieira, its soaring walls jutting out from the original building. Inside all is minimalist and marble. But perhaps the biggest surprise of all are the treatments for children, including splash-about Vichy showers and drinking small cups of the thermal water – just as the king did all those years ago. *Scott Dunn (+44 20 8682 5080; www.scottdunn.com) offers three nights from £700 per person based on two adults and one child in a suite, including flights and transfers*



CASA ARTE LAGOS

This is the antithesis of many people's idea of the Algarve, a tiny gem with crisp white lines on a country hillside far from the coastal crowds. It's the kind of place that feels like it's dropped off the edge of the world, where days come suffused with heat-induced idleness. Charming Lagos with its ancient churches and golden coves is a few miles away, but it's simply too hard to leave the shade of that gnarled olive tree near the swimming pool. Active children can vanish into the large gardens to play when they have wrinkled in the water. The house was built as a private home by an English architect in the late 1970s, so there are only five bedrooms but they're dotted about like dazzling sugar cubes, each one topped with the region's characteristic terracotta shingles and latticed chimney pots. Rounded windows and doorframes punctuate the smooth whitewashed walls. Floors and stairs are sun-burnished polished concrete, with black, white and grey tiled detail. Simple bedrooms lead into oversized bathrooms – four have showers only – with stone basins, fluffy dressing gowns and Ex Voto Paris ginger and sweet jasmine soaps, and cots are available on request. A couple of rooms interconnect for families, but the savviest gangs hook up with friends and take the whole place. +351 282 688185; www.casaarte-hotel.com. Doubles from about £105



PHOTOGRAPHS: NELSON GARRIDO; JOAO MARIANO

TRAVELLER PROMOTION

Paradise PERSONIFIED

From laidback havens to luxurious hot spots, jungle adventures to beachside downtime, take your pick of paradise on Thailand's Andaman coast

Sweeping crescent-shaped beaches; perfectly angled palm trees draped over dazzling white sands; impossibly turquoise waters: picture paradise and you will almost certainly be picturing a scene from Thailand's westerly 'turquoise coast', which stretches from Burma to Malaysia. But pictures cannot even begin to capture the full spectrum of blue and green hues interweaving its waters, and the soft caress of an evening breeze on salty skin. Not to mention the dreamy pleasure of walking along a deserted beach, creating puffs of talcum-soft sand at every step, and the sense of wonder inspired limestone cliffs that jut up in mysterious formations from deep bays. It is

easy to get to (fly direct to Bangkok then straight to the islands or direct to the islands via the Middle East) and inviting all year round (go during the 'green' season that coincides with the UK's summer and autumn when the jungle is at its most lush and the beaches are much quieter). The Andaman coast and its multi-faceted islands offer every imaginable variety of paradise.

WHERE TO STAY

Turquoise Holidays' top Andaman coast retreats:

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678400 or email enquiries@turquoiseholidays.co.uk

Phuket and Koh Yao Noi

First stop: **Phuket**, with its bustling old town, lively markets, golden temples and buddhas, cool spa hideaways – and, of course, beautiful beaches curving around tranquil bays. From Phuket you are but a breathtaking boat trip away from one of the hundred-plus surrounding islands in Phang Nga Bay: take a traditional longtail boat to the nearest one or soak up the scenery on a longer sailing cruise. Perhaps add a stay on the smaller neighbouring island of Koh Yao Noi, an idyllic hideaway that enjoys some of the best views in Thailand.



Koh Lanta and Koh Phi Phi

The gentle island of **Koh Lanta** is home to quirky shops and restaurants, colourful villages, long golden beaches and fabulous diving in its National Marine Park. On Phi Phi you can cruise around the dramatic limestone karsts that tower above the idyllic horseshoe bays of Ko Phi Phi Le, gaze down from heavenly viewpoints, join a beach party, take a dip at Pileh Lagoon, meet Monkey Island's macaques and snorkel in waters with 50-metre visibility. On the tiny islands of Koh Mook, Koh Ngai and Koh Radang you can explore more limestone outcrops and Land That Time Forgot caves. And when you're done island-hopping, you can easily extend your trip with a stay in Krabi on the mainland.

Elephant Hills, Khao Sok

GULF OF THAILAND

ANDAMAN SEA

THAILAND

The Sarojin, Khao Lak

Zeavola, Phi Phi

Six Senses Koh Yao Noi

Pimalai, Koh Lanta

Rayavadee, Krabi

The Surin, Phuket



Krabi and Khao Lak

From **Phuket**, head east to **Krabi** where dramatic limestone scenery and beautiful beaches set the tone for superlative snorkelling, rock climbing, cycling and trekking. Combine Krabi with the untouched beaches of Si Kiao, just one and a half hour's drive south. Or head north to **Phang Nga** province, where you can hike jungle-carpeted mountains and lakes; get up close and personal with the inhabitants in Khao Sok National Park; or settle in for an undisturbed sunset from the unspoilt beaches of **Khao Lak**. Paradise indeed.



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FAMILY

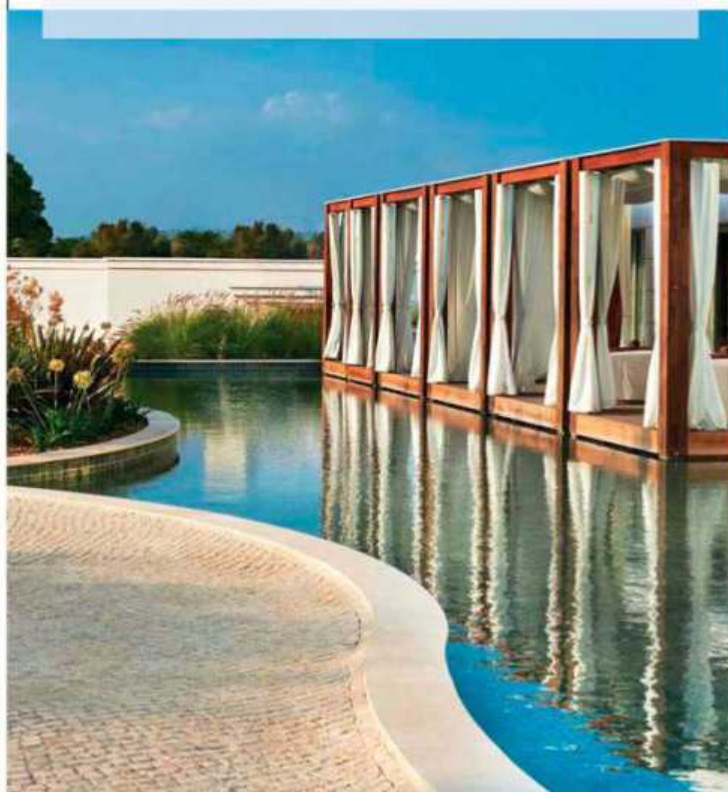


VILA VITA PARC PORCHES

It's surprisingly pretty here, with a Moorish feel to the low-rise architecture, gardens brimming with palm trees and bougainvillea, immaculate clipped green lawns and paths that all eventually lead down to a terrific beach. But it is big. The hotel has eight restaurants (two off site), so there's no chance of going hungry, and the extensive children's menu includes Hello Kitty stracciatella and Lion King Nutella crêpes. Choose a relaxed beach feast, a more buttoned-up Portuguese supper or book the babysitter for an evening at Ocean, one of only three two-Michelin-starred restaurants in the country. Much of the wine, honey, olive oil and meat is from the hotel's organic estate, Herdade dos Grous, in the Alentejo and a visit there makes a great day trip. In the Piazzetta, Café Bica serves coffee and the most sublime *pastéis de nata*, the speciality custard tarts. Breakfast is a selection of meats, cheeses, freshly baked pastries, eggs, five different types of bread and jars of organic jams. There's even a juice corner where you can choose the fruit and vegetables you would like and add spirulina, chia seeds and other healthy toppings. Early risers will be pleased to know it starts at 7am. There are eight swimming pools, including heated baby pools and a large indoor pool, many of them with swim-up bars serving smoothies, milkshakes and pink bubble-gum-flavoured drinks. Book into the Oasis Family Suites – the ones on the first floor have stunning roof terraces with views across the water to Morocco. Kids will be thrilled with the bag of goodies left on their beds, including a baseball cap, crayons and colouring books. Larger families should nab one of the newly renovated villas, Vila Trevo and Vila Praia, which sleep up to 10 and have their own infinity pools. *Elegant Resorts* (+44 1244 897517; www.elegantresorts.co.uk) offers four nights from £847 per person based on two adults and one child in a suite, including flights and transfers

CONRAD ALGARVE ALMANCIL

There is nothing subtle about this place. The Hilton-owned, six-storey whopper of a hotel is as full throttle as you might expect. But with all that resorty-ness comes the space for youngsters to wheel around and let off steam and for parents to enjoy candlelit dinners, the brilliant spa (try the Intraceuticals oxygen infusion facial and look 10 years younger) and the excellent golf courses right on the doorstep. Best of all there is always someone in just the right place to arrange it. The Young Guest Concierge will take children to water polo in the indoor pool, to mocktail workshops with Wilson Pires, Portugal's Barman of the Year, to dance classes or to make marzipan golf balls in the Little C Palace kids' club. There are princess tea parties, treasure hunts, films for the tweens and blindfolded ice-cream tastings for everyone. Budding cooks can take sushi-rolling classes with cool Aussie chef Andrew McGie, whose prawn popcorn is a hit at Louro restaurant. Kids can do as much of the organised activity as they want, fine-tuning it day by day. For a blast of sun, head down past the playground to the largest swimming pool and install the whole brood on the huge day-beds. The poolside Dado restaurant serves giant grilled langoustines, meaty beef burgers, moreish cod-fish fritters and non-alcoholic drinks such as Something is Missing (lime juice, mint, brown sugar and apple juice). The food is excellent everywhere, from the tasting menu at Gusto by Heinz Beck (you will want to eat the *fagottelli carbonara* every day) to afternoon tea in the bar. Those in search of peace and quiet should go to the heated infinity pool that looks out over the countryside. There might not be a sea view but the Atlantic is just moments away over the sun-bathed, terracotta-tiled roofs of Vale do Lobo. *Carrier* (+44 161 492 1357; www.carrier.co.uk) offers four nights from £672 per person based on two adults and one child sharing, including flights and transfers





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Asia: four letters that paint a picture of what is probably the most diverse continent on our planet. A place of infinite possibility that truly defines exotic with towering golden Buddhas and mist-shrouded pagodas, bustling markets and tranquil orangutan sanctuaries, shimmering glass skyscrapers and pristine desert islands.

From the snow-capped volcanoes and neon-lit cities of Japan to the temples and rice paddies of Myanmar, the delights of Asia are so manifold that planning a visit can be daunting. Fortunately, help is at hand in the form of the all-inclusive cruise line Silversea. The family-owned line sails to over 800 destinations across the globe,



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Explore Asia with Silversea and you could find yourself admiring Myanmar's glittering Shwedagon pagoda by candlelight, getting acquainted with the great apes of Borneo and squeezing between dramatic limestone cliffs as you navigate the emerald waters of Langkawi's Kilim River. They sound like money-can't-buy experiences but, if you choose to discover Asia from the opulent comfort of the 382-passenger *Silver Shadow*, these and other shore excursions are included in your fare, as well as economy class flights, transfers, gratuities, Wi-Fi and even a two-night stay at a five-star Shangri-La hotel

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: GOLDEN PAGODA, MYANMAR; RELAX ON DECK OF SILVER SHADOW; A TASTE OF SILVERSEA CUISINE; SILVERSEA IN HA LONG BAY, VIETNAM

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SILVERSEA



NEXT ISSUE
★ AFRICA ★

PEDRAS SALGADAS

BORNES DE AGUIAR

Muddy-kneed tree climbers will be thrilled at the prospect of sleeping among the leaves and the branches. Reached by long bridges, these two architecturally astonishing tree houses sit atop five-metre-high steel stilts between the cedars and pines. The forest hideaways are tiny but brilliantly designed like a yacht's galley, with a sleek kitchenette, smart shower room, pristine blonde wood from top to toe and high thread count cotton sheets. A huge picture window in front of the main bed looks onto the park where century-old sequoias soar upwards to the blue skies. All around is this silent, ancient landscape, where red squirrels chase each other and you might just hear wolves howl from the distant mountains. Explore the treetops via suspension bridges, ropes and nets, cycle along woodland paths, hike around the lake or, for those who want to soak up more than just nature, try the spa with its thermal waters – excellent for both respiratory and digestive problems. The park's location is ideal to visit nearby Chaves and Vila Real. Back within the gates, the Casa de Chá restaurant serves up hearty plates of regional sausages and black pudding, beans and pork ears with rice. After supper, work it all off with a dip in the outdoor swimming pool before a night high up under the stars. +351 259 437140; www.pedrassalgadaspark.com. Doubles from about £165



ISLAND CIRCUITS: MALTA

Clockwise from top left:
The dome of the
Carmelite Church rises
above Valletta, European
Capital of Culture 2018;
Malta International
Fireworks Festival;
Delicious local cuisine;
Golden Bay beach

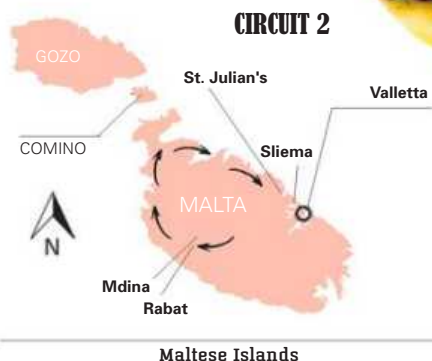


Maltese magic

In part two of our Maltese islands circuit, discover festas, food and fortresses amid the breathtaking beauty of the largest island, Malta. With heaps of history side-by-side with cosmopolitan culture, this destination has it all

From walled cities, baroque towns, sleepy villages and quaint fishing ports to the finest in modern, urban living – shopping, cafés, nightlife, clubs and restaurants; from places perfect for living it up to sites where it seems as though time has stood still, Malta has it all.

Whatever you wish to call it – The Fortress City; 'a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen'; the 'modern' city built by the Knights of St John; a masterpiece of the Baroque; a European Art City or a UNESCO World Heritage City – there is no doubting the inimitable appeal of Malta's capital, Valletta. Stroll the cobbled streets of one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world and the timeless atmosphere oozes from every pore of its ancient churches, palaces, forts, museums (housing incredible art works) and fountains. Look up and you'll see votive statues and coats of arms high on parapets. Dive down narrow side streets and you'll find quaint shops and cafés. Wander down to its harbours and soak up the atmosphere of historic ports that have been central to Maltese life since the 16th century.



Steeped though it is in history, there is also an enticingly hip (and very happening) side to Valletta. Malta's administrative and commercial heart, its main streets are lined with internationally-branded shops while al fresco restaurants buzz with diners savouring the unique gastronomy – an eclectic blend that reflects the many civilisations who have occupied Malta over the centuries. And almost every month sees another cultural extravaganza, including the International Film Festival; Folk Festival; Jazz Festival and Malta International Arts Festival. Little wonder Valletta has been named European Capital of Culture 2018.

Beyond its bustling capital, Malta proffers pure Mediterranean beauty, basking in year-round sunshine. Here you can enjoy life at its simplest one day and at its most cosmopolitan the next. Head to the rugged north for spectacular views across sweeping bays and out to Comino and Gozo or to soak up the atmosphere in the



coastal resorts of Sliema and St. Julian's. Central Malta is dominated by the medieval capital, Mdina, and its Roman sister city Rabat, where you can stay in everything from a townhouse hotel to a palace. Worlds apart, inland villages epitomise the soul of Malta's past, each with its own unique character. Head south for quaint seaside villages; the prehistoric, World Heritage-listed temples of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra – and the Three Cities: Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua 'the cradle of Maltese history', which have provided a fortress home to almost all of the island's past settlers. The local communities here celebrate holy days and festas as nowhere else on the islands – and given Malta's fantastic annual festa calendar, that really is saying something.

NEXT MONTH:
Circuit 3
Comino

How to get there

Fly to Malta from a choice of ten national airports with Air Malta. Malta is only a 3-hour flight from the UK and is served by national and budget airlines. With competitive prices, all including a 20kg baggage allowance, it is easy to see why Air Malta is the airline of choice. Prices from £75 one way, including taxes, subject to availability. For reservations, visit airmalta.com. Terms & conditions apply.



MARTINHAL SAGRES

There may be a new Martinhal, which opened this summer at Quinta do Lago, but the original property still feels like a blast of fresh air in the Algarve. It's strung out on its own, on a relatively unspoiled and windswept tip of the western coast. There are empty dunes to run down, beaches with thick sand and little fish shacks, and milky waves for surfing. In the two-bedroomed villas, which are connected to the hotel, the design is clear cut, with muted natural tones. There are stair-gates, cots and plastic plates should you need them, a TV for afternoon quiet time, a mini kitchen to cook in (buy supplies at the on-site supermarket), huge bean bags to flop out on and sun-trap balconies. There are also handy washing machines, towels aplenty and you can order in takeaway suppers. But the restaurants here are right on point, each one with a designated children's area jam-packed with colouring books and games, all overseen by a smiling member of staff who will remember your child's name. This means that little ones can occupy themselves not just before the food arrives, but also afterwards, so parents can actually linger over lunch (the freshest squid, pumpkin risotto with sage, juicy lamb chops). Plus, there's an excellent juice bar: try the yogurt, vanilla and fresh ginger smoothie. Days fly by. Bucket-and-spade time; pool time – there are five different ones, star of the show comes with giant floats and slides; kids' club time (sign up in advance as activities such as T-shirt printing get fully booked); and before you know it, bed time. It's all very good fun. Yes, there's a spa and yes the views are lovely, but mostly this holiday is about your children. They'll be on a high from beginning to end. +44 330 100 3183; www.smithandfamily.co.uk. Doubles from about £125

PINE CLIFFS RESORT ALBUFEIRA

This is not a place for those in search of glorious Aman design features or a groovy lobby hangout. It is a sprawling complex with a hotel, apartments and villas, plus six swimming pools and eight restaurants, set right up on the cliffs' edge with private access down to the sea. Most families head straight to Porto Pirata, the all-singing, all-dancing kids' club, which has two playhouse pirate ships that will elicit squeals of excitement. Hand little ones over to one of the highly qualified team – a bit like the sunniest Montessori teacher you know – for a morning or the whole day. They take babies as young as six months and children are grouped by age so no one gets bored. In fact, you usually have to drag them out. This is a sporty and outdoorsy spot with an excellent Annabel Croft Tennis Academy, golf for parents and kids, and the most fabulous beach flanked by the Algarve's russet-red rocks that make sunsets on the cliff-top Mirador Champagne Bar a truly theatrical experience. The choice of places to stay is vast – the main Sheraton hotel is currently undergoing a much needed renovation and should be lovely, and there are plans for a knockout spa, due to open next year. For now, book into the Pine Cliffs Terraces, a selection of three- and four-bedroom contemporary townhouses. Designed with a dose of Californian cool, they have fully equipped kitchens and laundry rooms (good for families with babies) and look out to a multi-level infinity pool. Some people like the villas so much they buy one. *Abercrombie & Kent (+44 845 485 1143; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk) offers four nights from £595 per person based on two adults and one child in a two-bedroom townhouse, including flights and transfers*



ADDITIONAL REVIEWS: OLIVIA FALCON; DAISY FINER. PHOTOGRAPH: RYAN DEARTH

DON'T MISS OUT

TATLER[®]

SCHOOLS GUIDE

2ND OCTOBER 2015

LIVE!

IN ASSOCIATION WITH 

At the Jumeirah Carlton Tower, Knightsbridge, London

If you are considering private education for your child, the *Tatler Schools Guide Live!* event is an absolute must – a full day of lectures and discussions moderated by **Mary Nightingale**, ITN newsreader, presenter and mother of two. A distinguished panel of education specialists from top prep and public schools will discuss the fiercely debated subject of single-sex versus co-ed, the eternal question of whether to board or not, and the nitty-gritty of applying to prep and senior schools, particularly in London. We'll provide all the information and advice you need to choose the right school for your child.

Speakers include:

- Mrs Vivienne Durham – Headmistress of Francis Holland School, Regent's Park
- Mr Andrew Halls – Headmaster of King's College School, Wimbledon
- Dr Niall Hamilton – Senior admissions tutor at Marlborough College
- Mrs Sally Hobbs – former Headmistress of Orchard House School
 - Mr James Hooke – Headmaster of Harrodian
 - Mrs Helen Lowe – Headmistress of Bute House
 - Mrs Samantha Price – Headmistress of Benenden
 - Sir Anthony Seldon – Master of Wellington College
 - Dr Joseph Spence – Master of Dulwich College
 - Mr Ben Thomas – Headmaster of Thomas's, Battersea
 - Dr Anthony Wallersteiner – Headmaster of Stowe School



Plus the opportunity to ask the *Tatler Schools Team* your individual questions throughout the day.

TO BOOK, VISIT
TATLERSCHOOLSGUIDELIVE.EVENTBRITE.CO.UK

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

To make harissa roast tomatoes, first preheat the oven to 200°C. Take a dozen meaty **tomatoes** and halve them across their bellies. In a large bowl, beat together two to three tablespoons of **harissa** with six tablespoons of **olive oil**, **sea salt** and a pinch of **sugar**. Carefully turn the tomatoes in the sauce then tuck them snugly in one layer, cut side up, into an oven-proof dish and spoon any remaining sauce over the top.

Roast for 35–45 minutes until tender and blackened in places. Allow to cool a little or a lot.

Meanwhile, blitz a few slices of stale **bread** (sourdough, perfect) to a rubble of breadcrumbs. Heat a slug of olive oil with a pinch of **saffron** and some salt. Fry the breadcrumbs, turning them, until golden and crisp. Tip over the tomatoes and finish with torn fresh **coriander**.



WORLD ON A PLATE

THE INGREDIENT: HARISSA

EAT ME By Joanna Weinberg

The end of summer can go one of two ways: either you try to desperately draw it out for as long as possible, necking rosé at every excuse, or you pack it away matter of factly in a parcel of memories to lay in the heaving trunk of life. In each case, the new school year resonates deeply. Energetically, it is a high point – roll up your sleeves and you can get more done in these months before Christmas than the rest of the year put together.

Which brings me to the store cupboard and its uses, a relationship that swings wildly between rewarding and deeply frustrating. It is here that the foot soldiers of flavour live. The jumble of jars and bottles tell stories of the passing fashions and lingering passions of my cooking life. Soy sauce, of course, Dijon mustard, capers, anchovies, pomegranate molasses, fish sauce, spices of every heat, depth and intensity. Pickles I've experimented with endlessly, oils and vinegars of every hue – too many. All pursuing the same end: a shortcut to a big hit of taste. As with life, it is in the race through the week, the grind of rolling out food day in, day out, that flavour gets lost.

And so to harissa, the fiery red paste of Tunisia. There, you will find it in meat stews and fish stews, stirred through couscous or in *lablabi*, the otherwise bland chickpea soup you might eat for breakfast. You could argue that in Tunisia, and in much of North Africa, harissa is the flavour. Its main ingredients are chillies, red peppers, garlic, coriander, cumin, caraway and vinegar. Like all spice mixes, there are local variations – even down to the household next door. Some replace lemon for vinegar, some make it young and vigorous with lemon verbena, others temper it with rose petals. For a smoky kick, you might choose chipotle (smoked) chillies to add to your mix or perhaps blister the fresh chillies first on a fire, then peel away the charred skin to leave the sweet, hot flesh to pound.


Back home, cultural authenticity be damned, you can do whatever you like with it: slather it over sardines for the barbecue or stir it through Greek yogurt and mayonnaise in which to dunk prawns, smear it on buns for burgers or beat it into a dressing for potato salad. My own favourite? Married with tomatoes, either in a cooked tomato sauce in which I would bake eggs for brunch, or better still, in this intense, late-season roast-tomato salad; perfect warm or cold, whatever your intentions for the day.

THERE ARE LOCAL
VARIATIONS OF THE
FIERY TUNISIAN
PASTE, SOME WITH
LEMON VERBENA,
OTHERS TEMPERED
WITH ROSE PETALS

DRINK ME By Malcolm Gluck

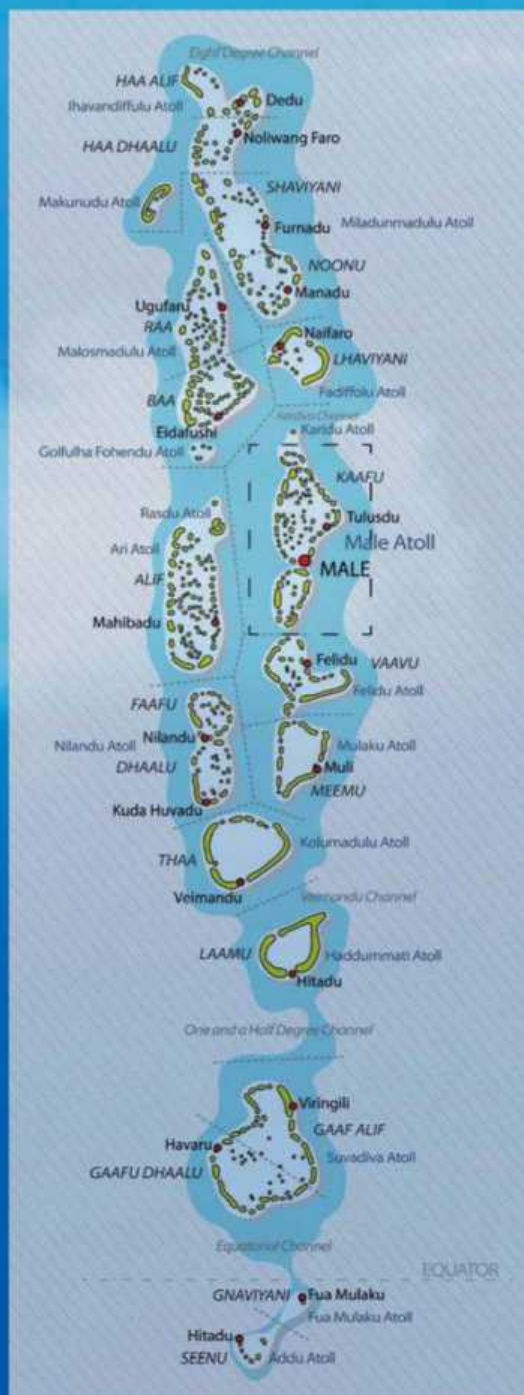
There are so many dishes into which my colleague has insinuated harissa that the wine waiter's head spins. This is on top of the fact that the sauce contains chillies, coriander, cumin, caraway and vinegar, and thus, on the face of it, its intrusion is another hurdle to jump. But this column thrives on exercise! So jump we shall – right into a nicely chilled glass of **Domaine Gerovassiliou Malagousia 2013**. We owe it to Greece, do we not, to help it out of its heroic monetary crisis and one way to do this is to buy lots of its wines, especially a modern white like this, which though syllabically prickly on the tongue is satin on the taste buds. With its textured, slightly tangy sveltiness, it is reminiscent – after a few hours decantation – of a quirky white Burgundy with a touch of Puglia.

The grape, however, the Malagousia, is entirely native. It is grown in Epanomi in Thessaly, the perfect place to raise a wine which, like harissa, so ineffably speaks of the Mediterranean. It is available at Wine Rack, which has two dozen branches, mostly in London and the south but also Sheffield, Leeds and Thirsk (access www.winerack.co.uk/ourstores for the complete list). Wine Rack will part with a bottle of Domaine Gerovassiliou Malagousia 2013 for 17 quid (and even give you a penny change). What's more, it is sealed with a screw cap (in Greek sky-blue), so it is also perfect to store away for a couple of years to develop with no fear of cork spoilage. That screw cap also makes for a longer-lasting wine once opened. I was still enjoying the dregs of my bottle 48 hours after the first sip (or rather, to be honest, slurp).

It will toothsomely accompany the harissa-ed sardines and the prawns. For those tomatoes we also need a chilled wine, to be sure. A red would work equally well, and the prime candidate is an Austrian bottle stuffed with the unpretentious delights of the, again local, Blaufränkisch grape. I sampled a good few examples recently but my favourite by far was **Tinhof 2009**. It is a wine of roasted plums with a tannic undertone, subtle but persistent, and it has a joyous overall fruitiness which is playful yet serious. The thoughtful taster will find hints of chocolate. It costs £16.60 at Savage Selection, a wine merchant in Northleach, Gloucestershire, which specialises in small producers who either through size or fastidiousness shun the high street. Find it at www.savageselection.co.uk or call +44 1451 860896. It is run by a gent called Mark Savage, by the way, and though some of his wines may be delightfully wild, he is a pussycat. 

PRODUCED BY
Condé Nast
Traveller
 PROMOTIONS

The Maldives : navigator



A far-reaching string of coral-encircled islands 250 miles off the coast of India, the Maldives has long been considered the world's most romantic destination serving both honeymooners and the super-rich. Of the country's 1,200 islands, approximately 80 have been snatched up by linen-trousered hoteliers, each determined to out-luxe the next. From 'suntan butlers' to salt menus, every possible luxury is lavished upon those who step ashore, and when you factor in the orchid-clad spas, Michelin-star menus and villas fitted out by some of the world's top designers, it's no wonder a million people flock to the archipelago each year. With bone-white sandy beaches, swaying palm trees and little to distract from the Bombay Sapphire-blue ripples, the Maldives is the ultimate castaway experience – but with cold towels, fruit-skewers and vanilla ice tea laid on. Welcome to paradise...

Insiders guide to Maldives

Want luxe *and* nature? We give you the lowdown on the world's best-groomed desert islands...

Words Leo Bear



Fast fact
The best time
to go is
December
to April

Paradise found

Five reasons to blow your monthly salary and hop on a seaplane...

Maldivian culture

As idyllic as resort living is, let's face it, a lot of it is based on fantasy. To get a taste of the real Maldives, you need to visit a living, breathing **local island**. Most resorts offer these island tours as morning excursions and they are well worth signing up for. Just a short ride in a *dhoni* (traditional sail boat) and you can be strolling through a handful of sunny streets soaking up the local culture. Pretty pastel-coloured houses originally built from coral (illegal now of course) are two a penny and a real delight. No cars, of course – the islands are too small – so the air is sweet as can be.

Ultimate romance

As mecca for loved-up couples, hotels in the Maldives go all-out to crank up the romance. You can be dropped off on your very own **desert island** for the ultimate Robinson Crusoe experience, take a yacht for a whirl at sunset with a chilled bottle of champers, or tuck into a flame-lit BBQ on a cushion-strewn sandbank. With a menu of lobster and wagyu beef plus a private chef, it's bound to be the best barbie you've ever had. Really, anything your heart desires can be rustled up. Alternatively, there's always the 'do not disturb' sign...

Water-play

The crystal-clear warm shallows of the Maldives are a big draw for **waterbabies**. Resorts pride themselves on their state-of-the-art dive centres where you can hire snorkelling equipment and learn how to scuba dive – but to check out the sealife, you don't actually need to take the plunge. Baby blacktip reef sharks, eagle rays, starfish and shoals of brightly coloured fish can be spotted from walkways over lagoons – and a few resorts even have underwater restaurants. Further out, the Indian Ocean is teeming with manta rays, turtles and every variety of tropical fish darting back and forth to feed on great walls of purple and pink coral. Whale sharks (the world's largest fish) are even found in the waters of the south Ari Atoll.

Laid-back luxury

Every resort in the Maldives is its own private island paradise, but for utterly splendid isolation, head to one of the **atolls** in the far north or far south of the country. These isles benefit from less 'traffic' (cruise ships, construction ferries and water pollution), healthier coral reefs and much more space to spread out. Whether you opt for a trendy resort with DJs spinning tunes late into the night or an ultra-chilled spa-centric retreat, one thing's for sure, you can forget your troubles the moment you set foot on your chosen island. With little to do except kick back, down towels and absorb vitamin D, it's the ultimate place to bliss out...

Fast fact The average temperature in the Maldives is 86 degrees all year round

For more information, visit **Maldives Tourism** visitmaldives.com

Design junkies craving a slice of pristine paradise should look no further than this resort in the lesser-trodden Baa Atoll. Winner of the World Travel Award for 'Maldives' Leading Villa Resort 2015', Kihavah's 79 spacious sanctuaries – poised over the water with sweeping ocean views or perched along an immaculate stretch of beach – are gloriously at one with their surroundings. Every frond of the island's tropical vegetation was kept intact throughout the resort's construction in 2010 (not a single tree was removed) and the results are there to see: it remains a wonderfully wild and untamed island. So don't be surprised to see tree trunks jutting out through the roof of some of the villas... Inside, glimmering crushed capiz shells are used to decorative effect while spiky bronze lamps shaped like sea urchins continue the elegant natural theme. A true haven for aesthetes, Anantara Kihavah is both raw and beautiful in equal measure. kihavah-maldives.anantara.com

Anantara Kihavah Villas

at heart



One of the leading eco-resorts in the Maldives, Park Hyatt Maldives Hadahaa prides itself on having one of the healthiest coral reefs in the area. Home to all manner of sealife including turtles, lionfish, eagle rays, flying fish and clownfish, you never know what you might glimpse. And it's not just the lagoons that are ripe for exploration. The Huvadhu Atoll, where the resort is located, is one of the largest and deepest atolls in the world. There are caves, vertiginous drop-offs and eye-popping kaleidoscopic subterranean landscapes to keep even the most experienced of

divers mesmerised. Book a night dive or snorkel, and you can discover the astonishing marine phenomenon of bioluminescence – a twinkling effect like a million microscopic blue stars in the ocean; and waves that glow in dark – it really is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And while the busy-by-day tropical fish get their zzzz's in, you can watch squid, lobster and starfish come to life, hunting their prey by the light of the moon. maldives.hadahaa.park.hyatt.com

Park Hyatt Maldives Hadahaa

a diver's paradise



Sun Siyam Iru Fushi

for spa goddesses

Located in the northern Noonu Atoll, a 45-minute seaplane ride from Malé, Iru Fushi is one of the Maldives' furthest-flung and biggest islands. Fully Maldivian-owned and run, there's a unique local feel to the place. Everything from the traditional Maldivian architecture to the abundance of fragrant curries, broths and rotis at dinnertime shouts authenticity. With more than

200 villas, it has a lively, social feel, especially in the evenings, and its generous proportions just mean more of everything you could ever want: more restaurants, more beaches and more things to do – there's even a disco-tastic karaoke bar open 'til late. Best of all, with 20 treatment rooms, Iru Fushi has one of the largest spas in the Indian Ocean. Having earned a solid reputation for its eastern holistic therapies, a recent collaboration with French marine experts Thalga has seen the spa's western offering being ramped up. With 70 new treatments incorporating sea minerals, plant extracts and nutrient-rich algae from the ocean, we can't think of a better place to try them than the watery environs of the Maldives...

thesunsiyam.com

One of the most iconic resorts in the Maldives, PER AQUUM Huvaſen Fushi has always dared to be different, and ten years after opening its doors, it's still at the top of its game. The clever, forward-thinking team behind the resort brought us the first underwater spa in the Maldives, the first underground wine cellar and it was also the first to install private pools outside every villa. A no-brainer, surely! A 35-minute speedboat ride from Malé, PER AQUUM Huvaſen Fushi is one of the easiest islands to get to, and once you're there, you'll be bowled over by the cool, imaginative concepts found at every turn. Think infinity pools overflowing with fibre-optics, the latest in raw food and juice boosters and a happening vibe that simply can't be manufactured. For holiday hipsters and sun-seeking fashionistas, there has only ever been one address in the Maldives – and that's PER AQUUM Huvaſen Fushi.

huvaſenfushi.peraquum.com

PER AQUUM
Huvaſen Fushi
the tropical trailblazer





Jahang Solih
Chef de Cuisine
Anantara Kihavah Villas

Where are you from originally?

Addu Atoll, the southernmost atoll of the Maldives.

You are the first Maldivian chef to receive the President's Award for services to tourism – what earned you this accolade?

Years of service in the industry, raising the perception of cookery among Maldivians, and alongside that, training young Maldivian chefs.

Do you have a signature dish?

Yes, a Maldivian fish dish known as Kandu Kukulhu which is a paupiette of local tuna with a blend of Maldivian spices.

You can't grow much on a desert island – what is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Produce is not a problem to source, but the high level of competitiveness in the industry here makes it difficult to be recognised as a talented chef – especially being a Maldivian.

What's the best thing about living and working in the Maldives?

The amazing job opportunities and being at home with my family.



Q&A

Maldives

Nick Doring
Vice President

PER AQUUM Hotels & Resorts

Where are you from originally?

Perth, Western Australia.

Describe your guests

Our guests appreciate privacy, design and unpretentious luxury as well as highly personalised service and mixing with like-minded people.

Name one thing that is truly special about the resort

PER AQUUM Huvaafen Fushi revolutionised luxury hospitality in the Maldives with groundbreaking concepts such as the world's first underwater spa with our fantastic LIME Spa and our underground wine cellar, Vinum. Ten years on from the hotel opening, we are still breaking the mould. We can also still claim to have one of the best 'house reefs' in the Maldives – the diversity of marine life is breathtaking.

What's your Maldives ritual?

Every night when I get back to my villa, I plunge into the pool – even if it's just for one minute. There is nothing like being in a private pool and looking up to the crystal clear sky and seeing how many stars there are... only in the Maldives!

What's next for PER AQUUM Huvaafen Fushi?

We can't rest on our laurels. We are always reinventing ourselves, and we are singleminded – and extremely passionate – about delivering experiences beyond our guests' wildest dreams.



Country

Republic of Maldives
is Asia's smallest country
both by area and
by population.

Capital

Malé

Population

340,000

Major language

Dhivehi

Major religion

Islam

Time

+4
hours GMT

Currency

Maldivian rufiyaa but
US dollars are widely
accepted in resorts.

Flight

■ emirates.com/maldives
■ qantas.com.au

Visas

British nationals can get a
tourist visa for up to 30
days on arrival provided
you hold a valid onward
or return ticket and have
enough funds to cover
your stay. Staying for
longer than 30 days
without the proper
authority is an offence.

International Dialling code

+960

Public holidays

■ **23 September**
Eid-ul Al'haa

■ **24 September**
Hajj Day

■ **25 September**
Holiday on the
Occasion of
Eid-ul Al'haa

■ **26 September**
Holiday on the
Occasion of Eid-ul
Al'haa

■ **13 October**
Islamic New Year

■ **3 November**
Victory Day

■ **11 November**
Republic Day

■ **13 December**
National Day

Hospitality

Traditionally, when guests
visit, the islanders will
welcome them by serving
a fresh coconut drink.
Enjoy!

travellers notes Maldives



WHERE ARE YOU?

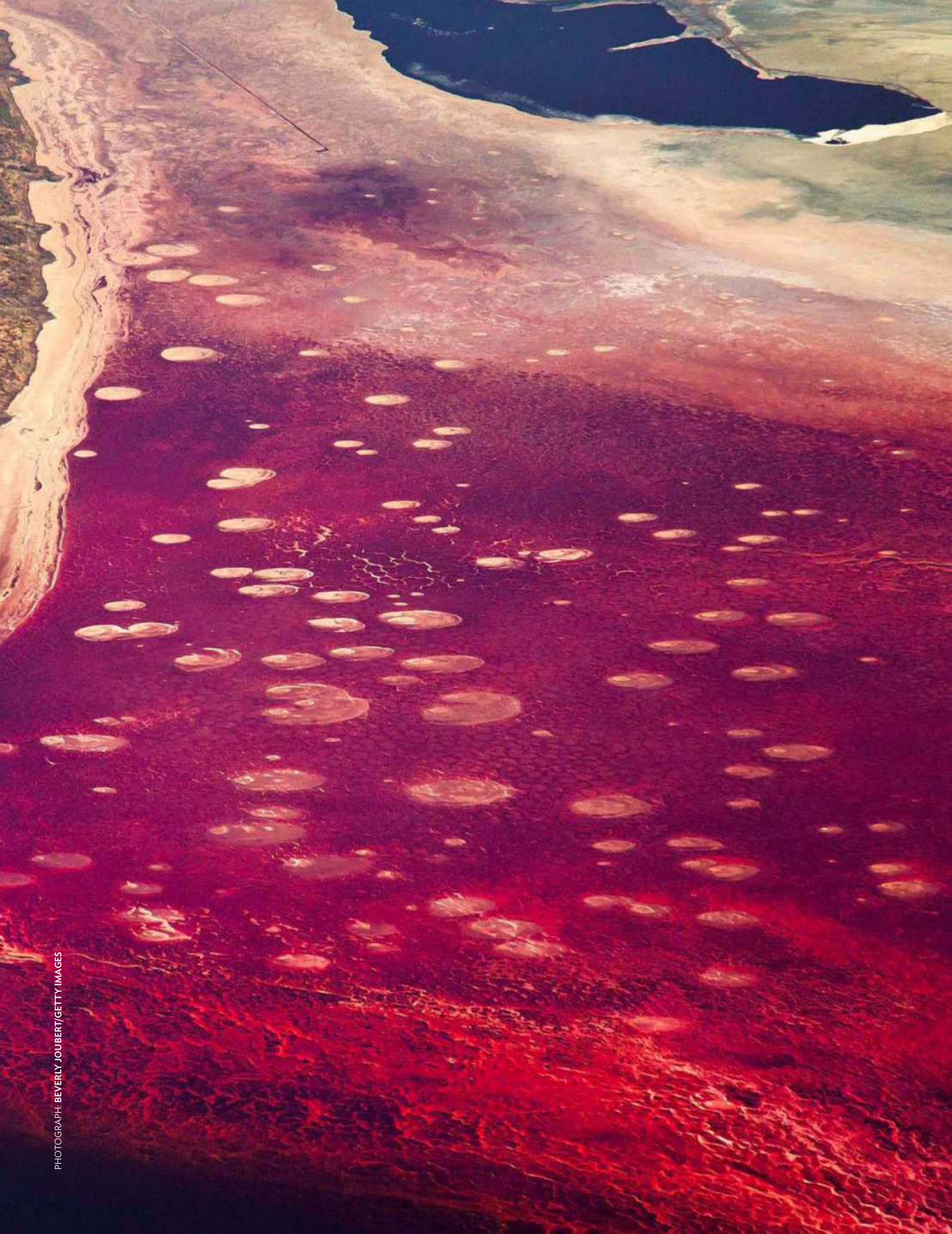
IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE a fiery extraterrestrial landscape, but this lake is actually home to two main earthly lifeforms. One is the flamingo; the other is a rather ugly but colourful species of bony fish. Both, however, are upstaged by the lake's beautiful crystalline surface, which fluctuates according to the light – from the cerise pink you can see here to brilliant white and electric blue. Despite the colour show, this is no discotheque: temperatures can rise to 85°C and the smell of saline vapour is overpowering. Another species with close links to the lake is humanity. It was near here that our early ancestors first started constructing shelters and making

crude stone axes – a major excavation by two of the country's most famous archaeologists revealed one of the largest collection of prehistoric tools ever found. Several hundred millennia and twists of evolution later, Ralph Fiennes filmed part of a thriller about the pharmaceutical industry here.

Where are you? EMMA SUDNIK

To enter, identify the place where the photograph was taken. Correct answers will be placed in a random prize-draw. For prize details, please turn the page. From the October issue onwards, the competition will be only appear online at www.cntraveller.com/competitions

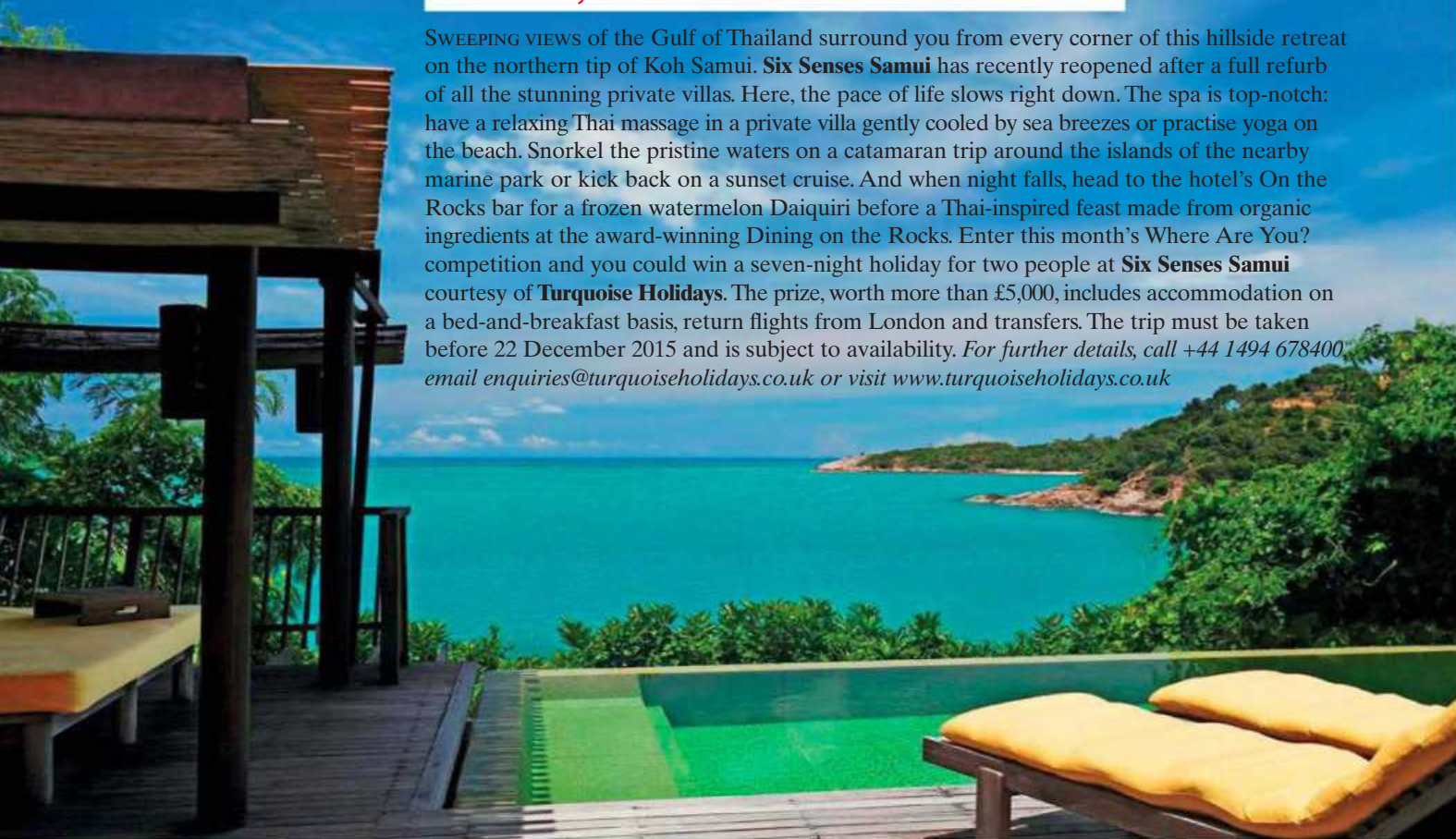
1. Entries for the Where Are You? competition can be sent on a postcard, by email or online (stating your full name, address and telephone number), and must correctly identify the place described according to the instructions given. 2. Entries must arrive no later than the last day of the month on this issue's cover. 3. The Where Are You? competition is open to readers of *Condé Nast Traveller* who are 18 or older on the date of entry, except for employees of Condé Nast Publications, participating promotional agencies, contributors to *Condé Nast Traveller*, and the families of any of the above. 4. The winner will be announced at www.cntraveller.com/competitions. Entries by post should be sent to: Where Are You? competition, *Condé Nast Traveller*, Vogue House, 1 Hanover Square, London W1S 1JU. Email entries should be sent to: compcntraveller@condenast.co.uk. To enter online and for full terms & conditions, visit www.cntraveller.com/competitions. The answer for June's competition is the Vatnajökull Glacier, Iceland.



WHERE ARE YOU? COMPETITION PRIZE

WIN A £5,000 BEACH HOLIDAY IN THAILAND

SWEEPING VIEWS of the Gulf of Thailand surround you from every corner of this hillside retreat on the northern tip of Koh Samui. **Six Senses Samui** has recently reopened after a full refurb of all the stunning private villas. Here, the pace of life slows right down. The spa is top-notch: have a relaxing Thai massage in a private villa gently cooled by sea breezes or practise yoga on the beach. Snorkel the pristine waters on a catamaran trip around the islands of the nearby marine park or kick back on a sunset cruise. And when night falls, head to the hotel's On the Rocks bar for a frozen watermelon Daiquiri before a Thai-inspired feast made from organic ingredients at the award-winning Dining on the Rocks. Enter this month's Where Are You? competition and you could win a seven-night holiday for two people at **Six Senses Samui** courtesy of **Turquoise Holidays**. The prize, worth more than £5,000, includes accommodation on a bed-and-breakfast basis, return flights from London and transfers. The trip must be taken before 22 December 2015 and is subject to availability. *For further details, call +44 1494 678400, email enquiries@turquoiseholidays.co.uk or visit www.turquoiseholidays.co.uk*



THIS MONTH'S READER OFFER

Save 20 per cent on a week's holiday at one of Tuscany's castle-hotels

THERE'S PLENTY to do at the majestic **Castel Monastero**, just a short drive from Siena. Start with a quick dip in one of the three swimming pools followed by pampering beauty treatments at the enormous spa. Catch golden hour in a hot-air-balloon ride for sweeping views of the countryside before a private wine-tasting session in the hotel's cellars. *Condé Nast Traveller* readers can enjoy a saving of 20 per cent on a seven-night trip here and an upgrade to a Deluxe room when booking with **Red Savannah**. The price, from £1,231 per person on a bed-and-breakfast basis, includes return flights with Easyjet from Gatwick to Pisa, plus pre-booked hold luggage and seats, and one week's car rental. This holiday must be booked and taken by 28 November 2015, subject to availability. Travelling in September incurs a supplement of £205 per person.

FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO BOOK

Call Red Savannah on +44 1242 787800 quoting 'Condé Nast Traveller' or for more information visit www.redsavannah.com



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BODY + SOUL

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MONTREUX

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail is seen from behind, sitting on the edge of an infinity pool. She is in a yoga pose, with her legs tucked under her and her hands clasped behind her back. The pool reflects the sky and the woman. In the background, there is a vast blue ocean under a clear sky. To the right, a potted plant with long, thin leaves sits on a stone ledge.

Healthy holidays have never been hotter.
Whether it's an emotional detox, body
bootcamp or beauty overhaul you're
after, we've rounded up the latest and
most sought after spas and wellness
getaways the world has to offer...

Words

Sadie Macleod

BODY+SOUL

Hotel Mulia, Bali

Situated on the very southern tip of Bali along the archetypal beaches of Nusa Dua bay, Hotel Mulia is the perfect place from which to restore both body and mind. For the best results indulge in a Full-Day Spa Experience that will be tailored to your wellness goals and combines a training schedule with delicious, healthy food and, of course, blissful spa treatments. Also worth exploring is the Ice Room (the first in Asia Pacific) which is cooled to minus one degrees Celsius – alternate between this and the warmth of the steam room to boost circulation, power up the immune system and leave you feeling totally rejuvenated.

Stay seven nights at The Mulia, Bali from £1,595 per person including flights and transfers, plus a food and beverage credit of \$200 and a spa credit of \$50. Book at healingholidays.co.uk

Buchinger Wilhelmi, Germany

If you are in need of a total body overhaul and aren't afraid of a little hard work, then Buchinger Wilhelmi is the place for you. Founded by Dr Otto Buchinger, this luxury clinic is known for its health-fasting programme and integrative medical techniques that treat a host of health issues from weight loss to chronic illnesses and digestion problems. And so that you can completely relax throughout the process,



Focus on food and fitness for the fastest way to get your body back into shape both inside and out

a doctor will be available for the duration of your cleanse. Despite the medical angle, the spa also includes a host of nurturing holistic treatments and programmes such as yoga, personal coaching, tai chi, physiotherapy and art classes. The clinic will even be presenting its first 'Happiness Week' later this year.

A 21-night 'Classic' stay here starts from €4,680 (around £3,475) per person. buchinger-wilhelmi.com

Viva Mayr Altaussee, Austria

Probably one of the most talked about health resorts amongst spa-junkies (and

A-listers), Viva Mayr, has just unveiled a new sibling resort situated in the crisp, fresh air of the Austrian Alps, set right on the shores of Lake Altaussee. For an all-over body detox there really is nowhere better. At the centre of the resort is Mayr Medicine – the famous healing programme which focuses on the digestion system, developed by Dr Franz Mayr almost 100 years ago. The knowledgeable staff are second to none, the treatments are expansive and yet completely bespoke to you, and the cuisine – which is based on traditional naturopathic philosophies – is as delicious as it is detoxing. The goal? To come away feeling in optimal health.

Hotel rooms start at €220 per night. Book at vivamayr.com

Royal Livingstone Hotel, Zambia

Set just a few metres away from thundering Victoria Falls, Zambia's Royal Livingstone Hotel is fittingly centred around the healing properties of water. Health conscious travellers will love its



new bespoke Royal Water Retreat experiences, which include a full body exfoliation with red dune sand to boost circulation, followed by a botanical Kalahari clay wrap to draw out toxins, then, during a final massage, guests are gently sprayed with a cooling mist – all this to the backdrop of the Zambezi riverbanks on which the hotel is located. Afterwards, enjoy a delicious sundowner of fresh paw-paw and guava juice out on the decking while you allow yourself to relax and reconnect with mother nature.

Prices start from £400 per night. Book at suninternational.com



Clockwise from top: The oasis pool at Hotel Mulia; A treatment experience at The Royal Livingstone; View of Lake Altaussee, the setting for Viva Mayr



SWISS *bliss*

Voted Destination Spa of the Year in the World Spa & Wellness Awards 2014,
Clinique La Prairie combines medical excellence with a holistic approach



Clinique La Prairie opened its doors again last year after a 12-month refurbishment that has transformed it into a one-of-a-kind health and wellbeing wonderland.

Situated along the stunning shores of Switzerland's Lake Lemman (an hour's drive from Geneva airport), the new-look medical spa combines contemporary

science with ancient healing philosophies to create the perfect place to rest tired bodies and minds. The accommodation (spread across three separate buildings connected by underground walkways) remains as luxurious and cocoon-like as ever, and the personal service is flawless, getting top marks for detail, attentiveness and discretion. The huge reality-suspending spa (1,600 square metres) is slick and soothing, kitted out with the latest technology and features 18 treatment rooms, a private spa suite, an indoor pool, a Kneipp path, brand new health club and a spa café: you name it, they've got it. The treatment rooms are like blissful bubbles, the lighting sets the mood and the therapists work their magic using exclusively the anti-ageing, cellular skin range from Swiss Perfection.

The new spa menu reinforces Clinique La Prairie's medical identity and every spa plan is customised to the individual (carefully crafted in collaboration



with the clinic's medical team) to offer visible and long lasting results. But what really sets Clinique La Prairie apart is the team of medical experts. There are more than 50 specialists covering 25 different medical niches, all under the same roof. Most medical problems can be addressed, and the centre runs amazing weekly programmes that combine consultations and treatments with relaxation, covering everything from weight management to better sleep and body mobility. Special mention goes to the outstanding Rebalancing programme, focusing on relaxation, pampering and restoring a sense of equilibrium. Based on a multidisciplinary approach, it encourages patients to take time to listen to their body, with the support of the very best specialists. Thanks to therapy techniques such as psychology and sophrology, a personalised programme of nutrition and movement, guests are guided towards finding the most effective ways to enhance their energy levels and inner balance, as well as identifying the essential tools to better manage and control stresses and tensions in their daily life.

Most programmes run for six nights on a full board basis and begin with a two-day medical MOT, including a chest x-ray, abdominal ultrasound and ECG. Whatever the individual reason for heading here, there are few better places to find a new you than at this Swiss medical masterpiece.

For further information visit laprairie.ch



Clockwise from inset: The Spa pool; Spa treatment room; The Kneipp path & steam room; Panorama of Clinique La Prairie

BODY+SOUL



1. ISCHIA LAPIS GLASSES, KIRK ORIGINALS, £250, KIRKORIGINALS.COM
 2. KANKEN BIG BACKPACK, FJALLRAVEN, £88, FJALLRAVEN.CO.UK 3. ATLAS POUCH, ATLAS AW15 COLLECTION, £495, SMYTHSON.COM 4. COTTON NAVY ESPADRILLE, MULO, £95, MULO SHOES.COM 5. PACKABLE CYCLING JACKET, PAUL SMITH 531 COLLECTION, £399, PAULSMITH.COM 6. NEPTUNE STONE BRACELET, \$17, TRASHNESS.COM 7. GYMPLEX SPORTS SHORTS £135, GYMPLEX.CO.UK



Gaya Island Resort, Borneo

If it is tried and tested traditional healing techniques that you seek to get you back on track, then the discrete Gaya Island Resort is for you. Set between sea, forest and mountains, the Spa Village draws upon the age-old practices of the indigenous people of Sabah (Malaysia's easternmost state). These include massages such as Urutan Pribumi (not to be missed) and an all-natural Red Rice, Corn, Avocado and Cinnamon Body Scrub - as

delicious as it sounds. Also, do make time for some guided meditation.

A week's stay starts from £1,479 including flights and breakfast. Book at itcluxurytravel.co.uk

Maya Ubud Resort & Spa, Bali

When it comes to enlightening the soul, there really is nowhere more spiritually connected than Ubud in Bali. Set upon the exotic banks of the Petanu river, the spa at Maya is a tranquil and holistic space in which to completely unwind. We suggest booking one of the private treatment pavilions for a 'Harmony Duo'; a four-handed massage with two therapists working together (what could be more dreamy?) followed by a herbal bath. Enjoy complimentary yoga every morning and there is even a riverside deck dedicated to reflexology.

A week's stay at Maya Ubud Resort & Spa starts from

Clockwise from right: Bath with a view at Limewood; The lush surroundings at Maya Ubud; Footbath bliss at Gaya Island



£1,075 including flights and transfers. Book with hayesandjarvis.com

Limewood Hotel, Hampshire

Hedonistic healers will love the Herb House spa at Limewood, which strikes the perfect balance between style and comfort, relaxation and result-led

treatments. Enjoy yoga on the roof amongst the aromatic herbs followed by one of its Bamford De-stress massages - where you pick your own essential oil depending on your mood. Also, take time out to enjoy the beautiful New Forest, which is quite literally on the doorstep. Plus, the smoothies at the Raw & Cured restaurant are a health-junkie's dream, as is its sugar- and dairy-free chocolate rocky road brownie...

Spa day packages start from £95. Book at limewoodhotel.co.uk

SOUL

Heal your spirit by leaving daily cares behind. These spas are all about space, scents and nature's bounty





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Tension in the mind leads to tension in the body, so take the time you need to restore balance and bliss

Amanpulo, Philippines

You know you're in for a treat when you are told that your 'spa valet' will be with you shortly. The uber-luxe Aman Spa at Amanpulo is totally equipped to cater for whatever your wellness goal may be. Treatment pavilions are tucked into the hillside affording awe-inspiring panoramic views of the Sulu Sea, as is the breezy Yoga and Meditation studio. Focused on restoring inner-balance and wellbeing – the philosophy at all Aman Spas – guests are encouraged to make good use of the resort's excellent facilities. They even have Allegro reformer machines for pilates enthusiasts, TRX and three different types of yoga class.

Stay seven nights from £3,375 per person including flights and transfers. Book at elegantresorts.co.uk

Nira Montana, Italy

The Nira Montana is like the Ferrero Rocher of the wellness world – rugged on the outside (some of

Europe's most beautiful mountains steeped in snow serve as the backdrop to your stay), smooth on the inside (exquisitely designed with all the mod-cons) with a solid centre. It's a wellbeing philosophy that aims to relax and renew naturally. The recently launched Health & Anti-Stress Package is perfect for city slickers on-the-go and in need of a proper break. The programme is designed to not only combat the effects of stress but also prevent it by using a combination of therapies from osteopathy to shiatsu.

The Health & Anti-Stress Package starts from £1,640 (around £1,162) for three nights per person, full board. Book at niramontana.com

Clockwise from top: The Sulu Sea near Amanpulo Resort; Simple elegance at the Nira Montana; Aromastone Therapy at BodyHoliday

BodyHoliday, St Lucia

The promise at this well-known, much-loved healing resort is that if you give the staff at BodyHoliday your body then they will give you back your mind. Anyone who has found themselves on the brink of burnout needs to pay this wellness wonderland a visit. From tai chi to spinning, zumba to aerobics, the list of ways to get your heart pumping is extensive. The Wellness Centre, where you receive your personalised wellness programme, is just as varied and offers some of the best beauty treatments in the business (if you're looking to get your glow back then it's worth paying a visit to the specialist skin care clinic). But it

is the Ayurvedic Ecstasy programme of therapies offered at the resort's new Ayurvedic Temple that really stood out for us. **Seven nights start from £2,689 per person including flights. To book, call Trailfinders on 020 7368 1200.**



1. T-SHIRT, GEM & I, £40, HIPANDHEALTHY.COM 2. V WIRE BIKINI, WE ARE HANDSOME, £199, WEAREHANDSOME.COM 3. POLYNESIA GLASSES, MICHAEL KORS, \$205, MICHAELKORS.COM 4. LAS DALIAS MULTI BOMBER, LILY AND LIONEL, £285, LILYANDLIONEL.COM 5. BLACK MATT PYTHON DEMI SNEAKERS, JIMMY CHOO, £595, JIMMYCHOO.COM 6. ACTIVE CAPRI LEGGINGS, WE ARE HANDSOME, £127, WEAREHANDSOME.COM



SPA *and Malay*

This year Malaysia is hotting up. We go behind the scenes and find holistic heaven in a land of infinite appeal

Many Southeast Asian travellers overlook Malaysia for well-trodden Thailand or en vogue Vietnam, but that is all about to change with British Airways' direct flight from London to Kuala Lumpur. Those who off-road Malaysia way, find a mellow destination with a huge dollop of diversity. From the hypnotic streets of Kuala Lumpur to ancient rainforests, abundant wildlife and blissful beaches, there is a part of Malaysia for everyone. What's more, gorgeous hotels are popping up countrywide and the wellness scene is the spa savvy's go-to.

Many journeys start in Kuala Lumpur, an edgy city where old meets new, where mosques and temples stand alongside skyscrapers, shopping malls and trendy nightspots. Well worth a stopover (the food scene is out of this world), there are hotels aplenty to bed down in. We love the serenity of Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur, a total oasis amid the urban whirlwind. A two-hour drive north of the capital, near the city of Ipoh, is one of the country's best-kept secrets: Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat. This wellness wonderland is hidden away in a valley of towering limestone hills and built around natural springs. Perspective-changing peace is enhanced by 25 cocoon-like 'garden' and 'water' villas, a thermal steam cave, ice bath, crystal cave and more than 40 holistic treatments. The luxury chill-out scene continues on both coasts, from the west's Pangkor Laut, Langkawi and Penang to Tanjong Jara in the east. For beach bunnies these are all instant flop territory. For spa-goers, Pangkor Laut's four-acre haven (one-time winner of our Best Overseas Destination Spa award) continues to wow with its dissertation of treatments. There are healing huts,

bath houses, nap gazebos and 22 stilted spa villas. The Datai also nabs the limelight for location, luxury, spa and food. Tucked away in the rainforest on the northern tip of Langkawi, its coral reef is just 100 metres from the shore, the forest spa is set by a little stream and its treetop Thai restaurant is divine. Other spa secrets are Penang's Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa and our east coast favourite, the brilliantly authentic Tanjong Jara. Just being at this Malay beach bolthole works wonders on the mind, body and soul and we love the spa's melting pot of therapies.

Blossoming Borneo, famed for its jungle adventures, also has a brilliant beach vibe. Just minutes from Kota Kinabalu (the capital of Sabah state), travellers will find the seductive Shangri-La Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa. CHI (its spa) is sensational – a stand-alone

Clockwise from top: Orangutans are native to the island of Borneo; Gaya Island Resort; Explore the coast by boat; Traditional food served on a banana leaf



island village where plant-based treatments reflect the region. And just 40 minutes away on Pantai Dalit beach is the secluded Shangri-La Rasa Ria. This beach babe on the edge of the jungle is a must for its 64-acre conservation reserve complete with rehabilitating orangutans. For a tropical finale, hop on a speedboat to jungle-strewn Gaya Island Resort with its laidback vibe and sensational spa village. And there's more on the horizon. The Malaysian government has launched therapist training programmes to develop local expertise and a focus on medical tourism will see a number of centres open soon. Watch this spa space...

For further information visit tourism.gov.my



BODY+SOUL

Santhosh Holidays, Ibiza

Ibiza is quickly becoming the trendiest place to visit for a life-changing wellness retreat – and Santhosh delivers this with a difference. Run by former lawyer Samiya Nordeen, this retreat is set amongst 30 acres of aromatic pine forest making you feel completely submerged in the natural surroundings. The focus is on dancing your way to your wellness goal whether that be fitness,

de-stressing or you're just looking for a good time. Classes include tango, salsa and even cha-cha-cha. The food is delicious, an all-organic experience, and you'll be encouraged to share a well-deserved sundowner in the evenings – the ultimate unwind.

Prices start at £1,750.

Book at santhoshdance.com

Como Shambhala Estate, Bali

If you like your bootcamp with a side of zen then this is the retreat for you. The award-winning Como Shambhala Estate is perhaps the health-junkie's ultimate dream destination. Its recently added 'Be Active' programme will whip you into shape, but in the gentlest of ways. With a jam-packed daily schedule of invigorating activities including circuit training, yoga and trekking, you won't want to escape the peaceful ambience of this spiritual resort. Not to be missed are the delicious food and juices that only further enhance your feeling of complete and utter wellbeing.

Book seven nights for £2,350 per person including return flights, transfers and three massages.
scottdunn.com

Wildfitness, Zanzibar

Offering a completely different take on the traditional body bootcamp is Wildfitness – set on the picturesque coast of Zanzibar. Its aim is not just to transform your body into buffness, but to completely change your whole approach to the way you work out and eat. Looking to nature as its guide for how to be fit and healthy, Wildfitness will have you running up and down sand dunes, lifting logs (not weights) and swimming across creeks. Thankfully the team also believes strongly in rest and recuperation, so you will also find plenty of downtime in the schedule. **Prices start from £3,165 per person on a fully inclusive basis for nine days, including flights.** Book at turquoiseholidays.co.uk

Clockwise from top: Sunset at Wildfitness, Zanzibar; Find peace at Como Shambhala; Massage treatment at Como Shambhala; Ibiza bliss at Santhosh Holidays

Grayshott Spa, Surrey

A hot fave amongst burnt-out city workers, Grayshott Spa is the place to come to press the reset button. Its recently launched two-night break, Dynamic Power, is a great way to kickstart your fitness regime. Starting with a body composition analysis, guests undergo personal training and exercise classes plus a choice between a tennis or golf lesson. You'll be dining on Grayshott's spa cuisine (it has its own cookbook – *Gut Gastronomy*) and each day is finished with a therapeutic spa treatment – of which you will feel utterly deserving. **Dynamic Power packages start at £600 per person for two nights.** Book at grayshottspa.com



1. TAOS BIKINI TOP, £100; TAOS BIKINI BOTTOM, £130, BOTH [PAIN DESUCRE.COM](http://PAINDESUCRE.COM) 2. HAND SURFBOARD, FRESCOBOLCARIOCA.COM 3. BANDA GOLD LEATHER SANDALS, FITFLOP.CO.UK 4. NOMAD CROP, TULLY LOU, £55, HIPANDHEALTHY.COM 5. PEGASE POP PRINTED WALLET IN SWIFT CALFSKIN, HERMÈS, £2,558, UK.HERMES.COM 6. LAS DALIAS MULTI TRAVEL TOTE, LILY AND LIONEL, £99, LILYANDLIONEL.COM



HEART

Love your heart by getting your blood pumping in some surprising ways at these super spas...

wish upon A SPA

For a short-haul overhaul, the spa at Gran Hotel Bahia del Duque works wonders on the mind, body and soul

Set along the beautiful Playa del Duque on Tenerife's south coast, this grand dame of a hotel is five-star Canary Islands at its very best. An all-encompassing all-rounder (it turns its hand to just about everything) one of its greatest assets is its outstanding spa. Beautifully designed and crafted, this serene space boasts 20 treatment rooms, a 35-metre outdoor thalassotherapy pool, five open-air massage cabanas and two ultra-private VIP suites with their own patios and relaxation areas. Surrounded by aromatic gardens, the natural architecture, light interiors and soothing vibe set the perfect scene for a top-to-toe pamper-fest. The spa's treatment list is utterly unique with many remedies created using locally sourced ingredients from land and sea. Try the Algae Detox wrap, Bamboo Scrub or Citrus Bath;

amazing facials include '02 Awakening' and 'The Cure'; there are massages galore and wonderful signature treatments spearheaded by the soothing Aloe and Banana Leaf Ritual. For the serious spa-goer the multi-day programmes are excellent (we like the sound of the five-day Relax Journey). The spa's facilities are top-notch, kitted out with state-of-the-art technology: particularly impressive is the open-air seawater spa circuit with its jets, massage beds, plunge pools and hammam, using water (either heated or freezing) from the Atlantic Ocean. For gym bunnies and the health conscious, the excellent Kinesis Gym ticks the box; the Chi Studio hosts excellent yoga, pilates and meditation classes, and the spa café gets a big thumbs up for its light, creative dishes and A to Z of natural fruit juices.



is in exceptional company. Since 2010, the spa has had an exclusive physiotherapy area run by Michal Novotny, whose client list includes Rafa Nadal, Roger Federer and Maria Sharapova. He also specialises in osteopathy and acupuncture. From head to foot, this Spanish spa is a mind, body and soul winner. **For further information visit bahia-duque.com**

From products to people, the spa at Gran Hotel Bahia works only with the very best. When not focusing on local ingredients, the treatments use Natura Bissé, one of Spain's leading beauty brands. All the therapists seem to have magic at their fingertips, but anyone looking for a physiotherapist

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Clockwise from top:
The 35-metre
thalassotherapy pool;
Outdoor treatment
cabanas; VIP suite;
Aerial view of the
thalassotherapy pool

TRAVELLER PROMOTION

BODY+SOUL

Best for UK retreat...

The Yeotox by Yeotown, UK

Running every week from Wednesday to Sunday, the renowned, five-day Yeotox retreat will transfer your mind, body and soul in one fell swoop. It includes coastal hiking, meditation, nutrition talks, strength training, healthy food (deliciously free from caffeine, sugar, wheat, gluten and meat) and even massages.

£1,807, yeotown.com

Best for getting results...

Sha Wellness Clinic, Spain

The ever-innovative Sha Wellness Clinic is known for delivering on its promises. Whether your goal is detoxing, getting fit, de-stressing or even quitting smoking (it has a specific anti-tobacco programme), the team will make sure you achieve it before you leave. Gym bunnies will love the spa's recently introduced Jukari class - a physical activity created by Reebok in collaboration with Cirque du Soleil that focuses on putting the fun back into fitness. shawellnessclinic.com

Best for day spa...

Ushvani, London

Based in the heart of Chelsea, this Malaysian-inspired day spa focuses on delivering natural treatments in a luxurious and indulgent environment. The therapists are second to none and they even have their own dedicated yoga and Pilates studio. The Malay Massage is 90 minutes of pure heaven and will transport you to another world entirely.

ushvani.com

Clockwise from right: a bedroom at The Yeotox by Yeotown; the spa pool at Ushvani in London; beach at St Regis Mauritius; on the sand at Skiathos Princess Hotel, Greece



Best for aspiring yogis...

Skiathos Princess Hotel, Greece

Part of the established and uber-luxe Santikos Collection, this hotel has established itself as being a yogi's dream destination since its launch of YogaFest, a six-day yoga and aqua-yoga retreat. Classes are taken by none other than Lady Gaga's

personal YOGAqua trainer and involve a fusion of yoga with the art of stand-up paddle boarding. Make time one evening for the moonlit class for a truly spiritual experience before bed. The ultimate relaxation. Namaste.

skiathosprincess.com



BLIST OF THE REST

These wonderfully individual wellness centres offer an enticing range of carefully honed experiences



Best for pampering...

St Regis, Mauritius

The Iridium Spa at St Regis is luxurious on another level. Every detail has been thought of, from the classic, beautiful interiors to the extensive spa menu and even the deliciously healthy food on offer. Therapies are holistic yet result-led and all aim to deeply relax and restore your body and mind. Indulge in everything from manicures to anti-ageing facials and massage treatments. All of which will be delivered to the highest standard leaving you feeling totally relaxed and renewed.

starwoodhotels.com



VOGUE *café*

Vogue Café Moscow

Kuznetsk Bridge 7/9,
Moscow, Russia

Vogue Café at The Dubai Mall

Dubai, UAE

Vogue Café Kiev

Fairmont Grand Hotel,
Kiev, Ukraine

Vogue Lounge Bangkok

MahaNakhon CUBE,
Bangkok, Thailand

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*From better skin to a cleansed psyche,
everything is achievable when you know
where to go...*

Peninsula Beverly Hills

For one of the best beauty binges in the business, do as the A-listers do and check yourself into the Peninsula Beverly Hills – so glam it has a 'no phones' policy to prevent its loyal celeb clientele from ending up on social media. The latest facial – 'Good to Gorgeous in under 60 Minutes' – is designed to improve muscle tone and increase skin elasticity by using Tama Microcurrent technology (electronic and magnetic waves). The brilliant results are addictive. What are you waiting for?

Treatments start at \$325 USD. For more information visit peninsula.com

LUX* Resorts and Hotels

Drawing on the extensive knowledge of Chelsea-based gym owner Stephen Price from SP&Co, LUX* Resorts & Hotels has just launched its Wellness Concierge Service. Each programme is completely bespoke and designed to help guests achieve all their health and wellness goals – from detoxing to toning up. And, you can continue the good work at home in the comfort of the SP&Co club.

luxresorts.com

Villa Tropez

The only thing better than a wellness retreat is a retreat with friends. Villa Tropez offers ample space for

14 guests and comes with a yoga pavilion, private pool, gym equipment, meditation area and acres of private garden. Rustic (it used to be a farming lodge) yet offering all the right mod-cons, the villa strikes the perfect balance between homely and luxurious. And then there is the perfect terrace on which you can all share a glass of well-earned rosé.

villatropez.com

Banyan Tree

Sybaritic spa-goers will long be familiar with the wellness facilities at the luxury Banyan Tree properties – and now there is even more reason to indulge. Launched at the group's Sanya resort in 2008, signature

treatment the healing hydrothermal Rainforest experience is now also available in Mexico, Al Wadi and Thailand. Guests journey through the cascading Rain Walk and Aroma Steam Chamber before cleansing both body and mind in the hammam, followed by a relaxing and detoxing mud massage. Amazing.

banyantree.com

Clinique La Prairie

More of a wellness institution than a medi-spa, Clinique La Prairie's aim is to help clients live better and longer. The 60-strong team of committed expert consultants are all dedicated to slowing down the effects of ageing both inside and out. Its

BODY+SOUL

anti-ageing

change the way you eat

highly-regarded beauty programme (which includes a full medical checkup, personal training, skin screenings and facials) will not only leave you looking better but also feeling your very best. laprairie.ch

● Capsis, Crete

The five-star Capsis wellness resort 'Out of the Blue', has an exclusive partnership with Pierre Dukan of Dukan Diet fame. For seven to 14 days you will be guided and supported by a team of experts through the Dukan dietary programme so that you come away feeling confident enough to continue the diet at home. The programme also

pamper to perfection

rejuvenate body & soul

includes a daily exercise plan. Expect results such as lower blood pressure, weight loss and an improvement in insulin sensitivity. capsis.com

● Sandals

For the ultimate in couples' spa therapy, pay a visit to one of Sandals' exclusive resorts and head straight to one of its Red Lane Spas, where the team has recently added 'Heaven on Earth' to its lengthy list of illustrious treatments. For 90 minutes, two therapists will work on relaxing and restoring your body – also included is the 'Flawless Facial' which illuminates and

plumps the skin to utter perfection. Definitely sounds like heaven. sandals.co.uk

● Oberoi Wildflower Hall, Himalayas

Find your legal highs 8,250 feet above sea level at the Oberoi Wildflower Hall in the Himalayas. Indulge in private yoga sessions, Ayurvedic therapies or even a holistic rose-water bath that overlooks the mountains and valleys beyond. Sheer bliss. oberoihotels.com

● Kamalaya, Koh Samui

If you are going through a life change and feel in need of some support

restore inner balance

and guidance, then take a trip to the wellness wonderland of Kamalaya, located on Thailand's serene island of Koh Samui. The brainchild of two people whose mission is to serve and inspire others, Kamalaya is always ahead of the curve in its treatments. The 'Embracing Change' package is its first foray into wellness programmes that explore the client's inner life and emotions. Expect a series of consultations, wonderful massages and traditional Chinese medicine all focused on inspiring spiritual and mental growth and self-discovery. Book with: healingholidays.co.uk

BODY+SOUL

Tour operators

■ Carrier

carrier.co.uk
0161 491 7630

■ Elegant Resorts

elegantresorts.co.uk
01244 897505

■ Hayes & Jarvis

hayesandjarvis.co.uk
0844 855 4488

■ Healing Holidays

healingholidays.co.uk
020 7843 3597

■ ITC

itcluxurytravel.co.uk
01244 355505

■ Sandals

sandals.co.uk
08000 223030

■ Scott Dunn

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■ Aegean Airlines

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■ British Airways

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■ Delta

delta.com

■ Emirates

emirates.com

■ Kenya Airways

kenya-airways.com

■ Garuda Indonesia

garuda-indonesia.com

■ Jet Airways

jetairways.com

■ Malaysia Airlines

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■ Philippine Airlines

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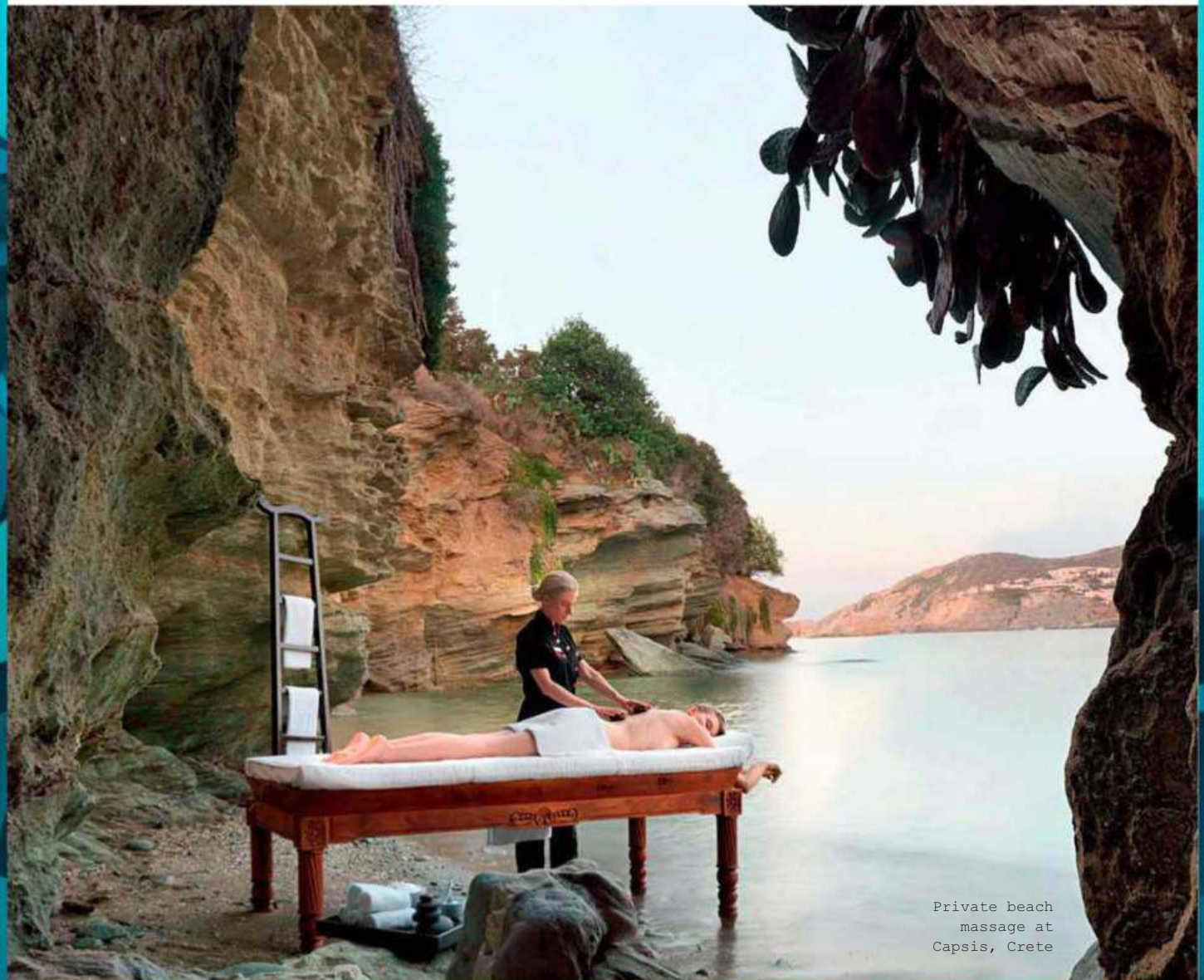
■ Thai Airways

thaairways.co.uk

■ Virgin Atlantic

virgin-atlantic.com

DIRECTORY



Private beach
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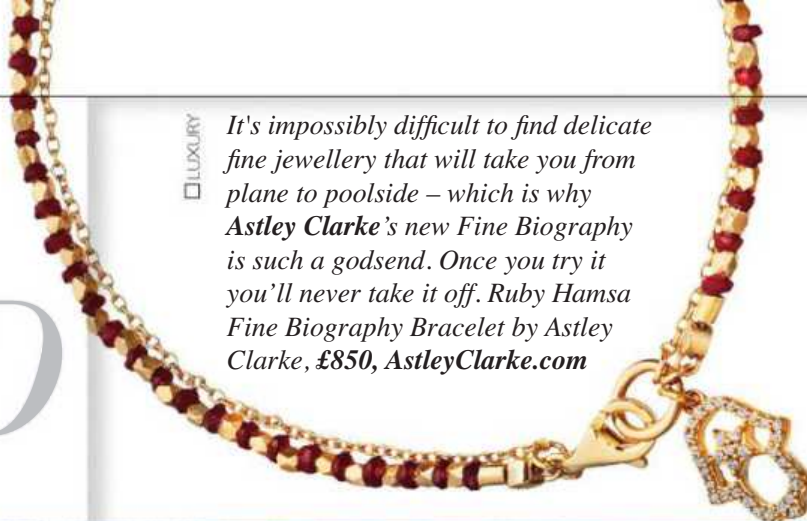


MOST WANTED

THEA DARRICOTTE uncovers your world

□ LUXURY

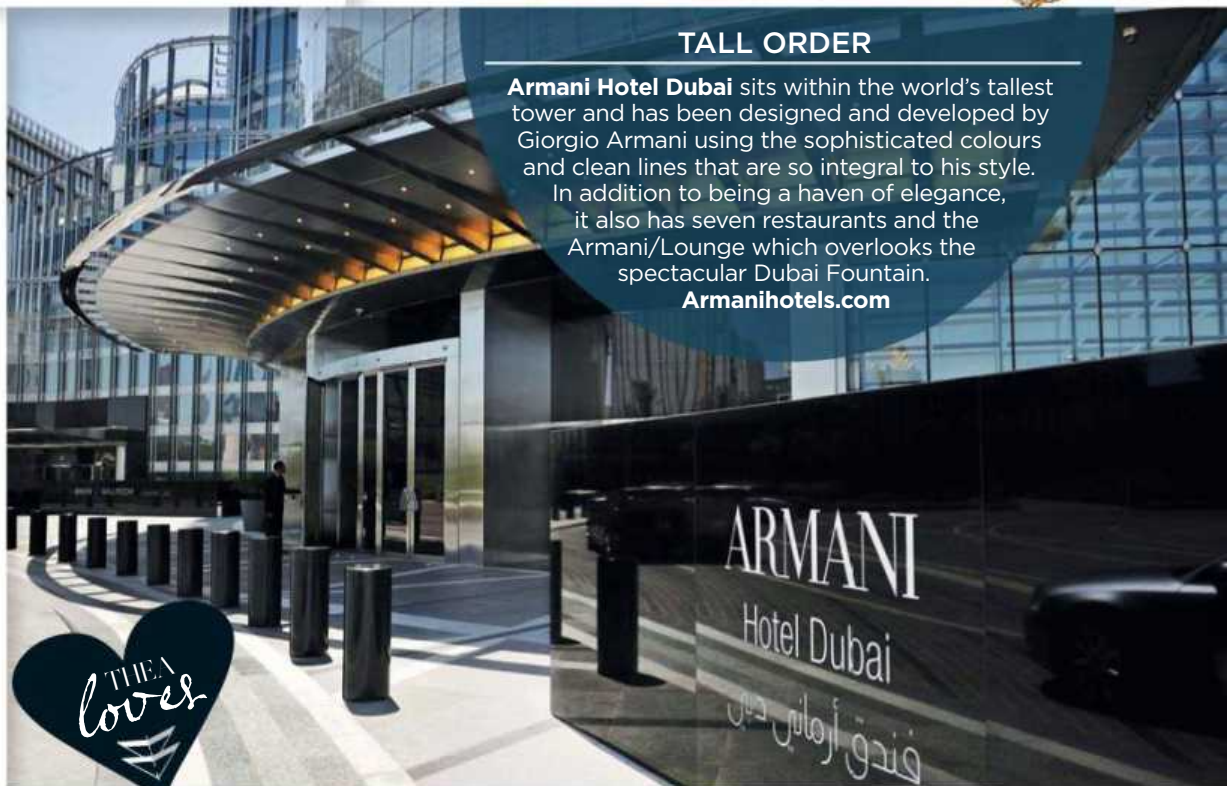
It's impossibly difficult to find delicate fine jewellery that will take you from plane to poolside – which is why **Astley Clarke's** new *Fine Biography* is such a godsend. Once you try it you'll never take it off. **Ruby Hamsa Fine Biography Bracelet** by Astley Clarke, £850, AstleyClarke.com



□ HEALTH & BEAUTY



Lancôme's latest mascara, Hypnose Volume-à-Porter, has its first-ever elastomere brush with a flexible head for precision application and 306 bristles to guarantee a generous but even application. Your lashes are in for a treat. **£22.50, lancome.co.uk**



TALL ORDER

Armani Hotel Dubai sits within the world's tallest tower and has been designed and developed by Giorgio Armani using the sophisticated colours and clean lines that are so integral to his style. In addition to being a haven of elegance, it also has seven restaurants and the Armani/Lounge which overlooks the spectacular Dubai Fountain. **Armanihotels.com**



□ HEALTH & BEAUTY



ESPA's new daily skin shield utilises the latest Micro-pearl UV technology to help protect skin from UVA, UVB and environmental damage while effectively smoothing the complexion for a beautifully healthy finish every day. **£35, espaskincare.com**

□ FASHION



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£170, taylormorris.com

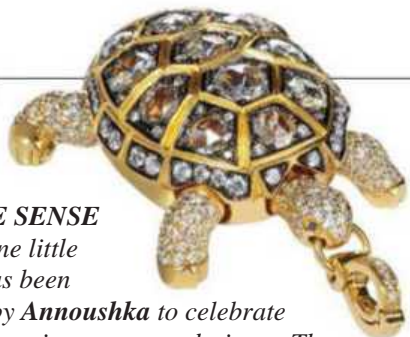
Take advantage of the sunshine and head to the **Moët Ice Impérial summer pop-up** in partnership with **Bompas & Parr** at **Madison RoofTop Bar** overlooking the dome of **St Paul's Cathedral**. Get there between 7-8pm on a Wednesday there are plenty of treats in store. **Moet.com, Madisonlondon.net**



□ LUXURY



Troubadour is known for its beautiful, handcrafted Italian leather bags which are now available for the first time in olive green. Designed to age well, they are pieces you'll keep forever. **Rucksack £1,225, troubadourgoods.com**



TURTLE SENSE

This divine little fellow has been created by **Annoushka** to celebrate her 25th anniversary as a designer. The turtle is an ancient symbol of longevity and perseverance and this beautiful locket will certainly make an opulent heirloom. Mythology 18ct gold and diamond turtle locket amulet, **£19,500, annoushka.com**



HEALTH & BEAUTY

REGENERATE Enamel Science™ is the first-ever dental-care system able to reverse early enamel erosion and regenerate enamel mineral, essential to anyone wanting a long-lasting, beautiful smile. **REGENERATE Enamel Science™ Advanced Toothpaste £10, Selfridges.com**

FOOD & DRINK



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Garnish with a slice of lime and hey presto: one delicious Cosmopolitan. **Mövenpick** Ice Cream available from Ocado, **£8.49** for 900ml,

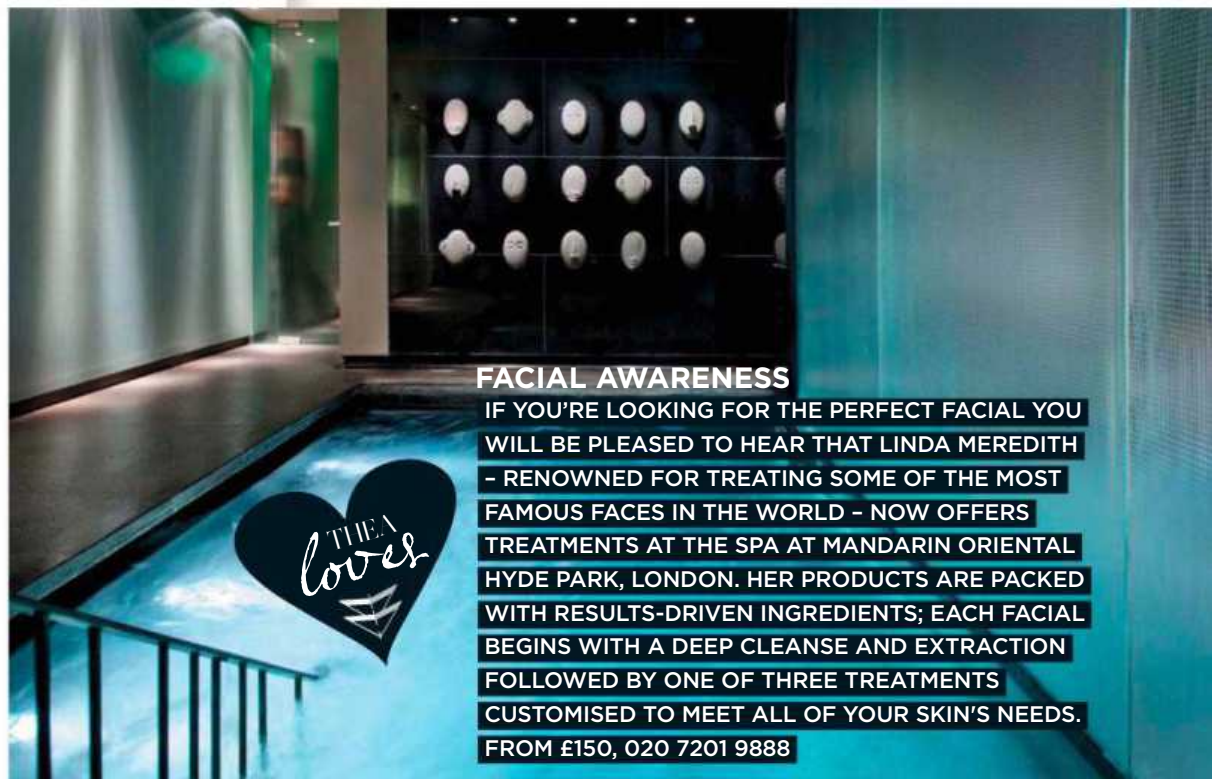
Movenpick-icecream.co.uk

HEALTH & BEAUTY



SUNUVA's kids swimwear and beachwear has UPF protection so your children will be even more protected in the sun – this Lobster Floatsuit is an irresistible combination of style, UPF50+ and removable floats to help teach your little one to swim in safety.

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LUXURY



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Autograph Collection, Marriott International's exclusive portfolio of hotels, now includes Cotton House Hotel Barcelona. Guests will enjoy staying in an authentic residence dating back to 1800 which has been updated by world-renowned designer Lázaro Rosa-Violán.

Autographhotels.com

HEALTH & BEAUTY

MANICURE? CZECH!

This impossibly smart manicure set from **CZECH & SPEAKE** is Air Safe, making it an essential part of any jet-set gentleman's grooming kit. **£198, mrporter.com**

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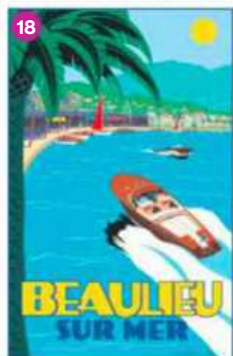
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DESTINATION UNKNOWN... CONTINUED



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21. SBC's dermatologically-tested, 100% allergen-free Cotton Hand and Body Lotion, cares for delicate skin. This mild, gentle milky lotion offers a naturally-proven effective blend of Cotton and Oat Flour extracts along with Wheat Germ and moisture-boosting Milk Peptides. Rediscover silky-soft skin. Priced at £19.00 visit www.sbcgels.co.uk.

22. PEVONIA's YouthRenew™ Tinted Cream SPF 30 is the ultimate 5-in-1 daily defence moisturiser, containing powerful natural ingredients for instant radiance in five seconds. Multiple anti-ageing benefits and a protected flawless complexion. YouthRenew™ Tinted Cream SPF 30 priced at £45, available in the UK & Ireland and at elite spas worldwide. www.pevoniaco.uk

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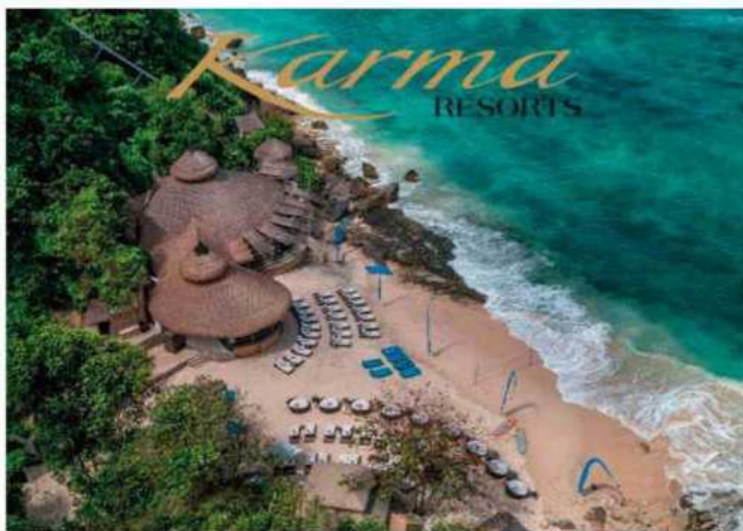


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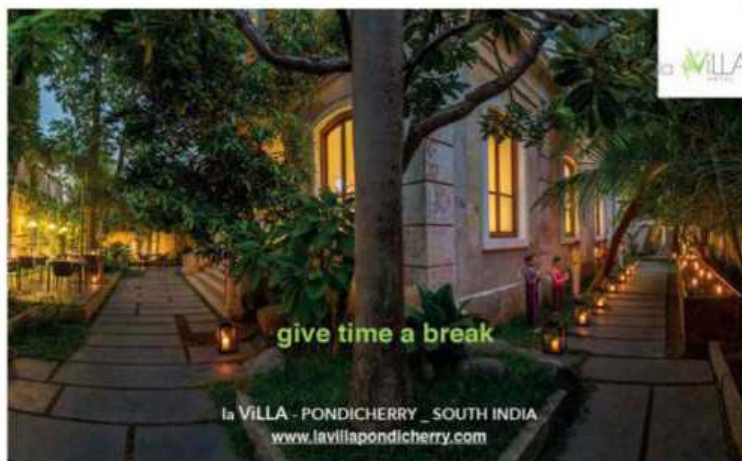
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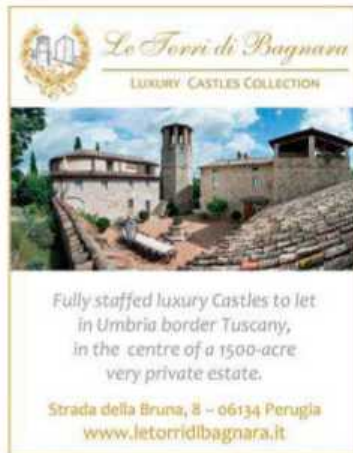
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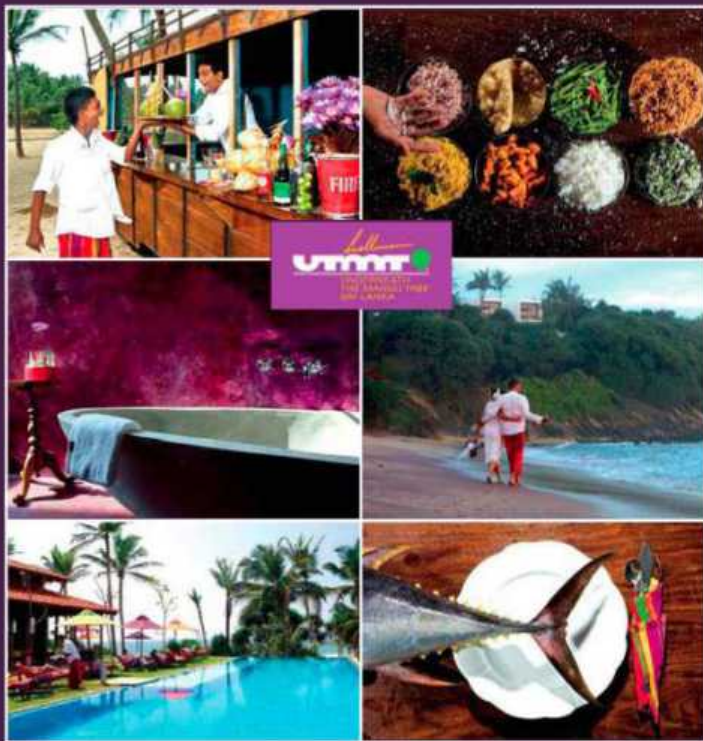
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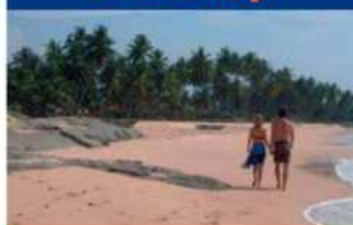
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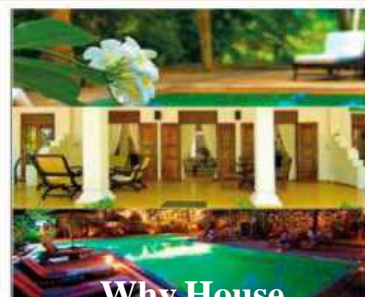


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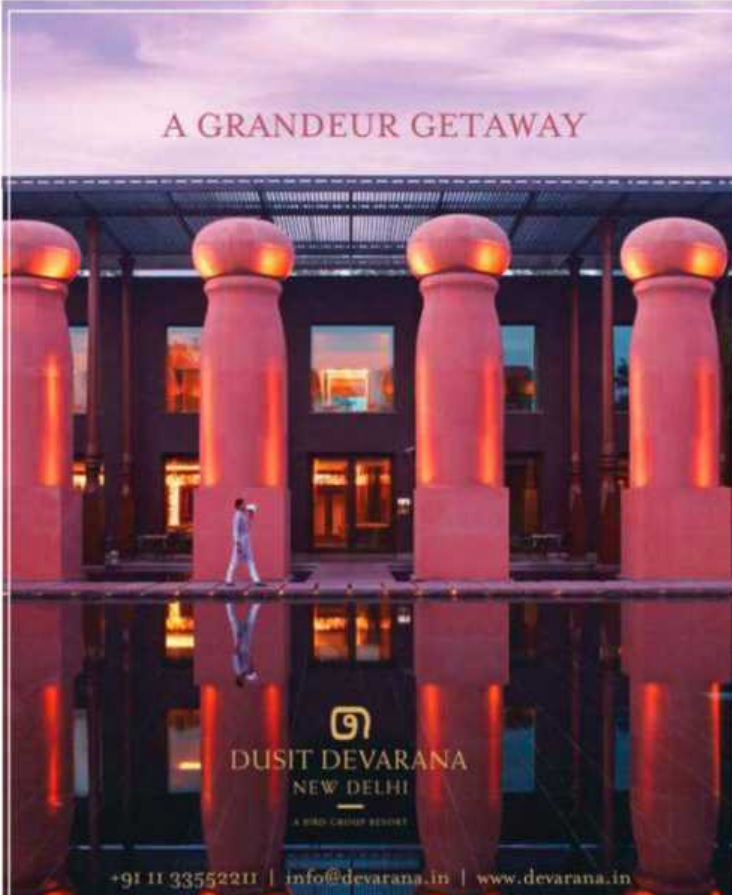




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WHY WE LOVE IT Dervla Murphy used to say Ethiopia gave her the sense of living in different centuries simultaneously. In the Danakil, the great desert depression that lies in the east of the country, you feel it might be the very first century, even the first day, before God got around to filling in the empty spaces with fussy details like hills, vegetation and rivers. The landscapes are skeletal, elemental, thrilling and vast. Its inhabitants, the aloof Afar tribesmen, live in goat-skin tents like upturned coracles and control the salt trade that has been a feature of this place since the beginning of time. This is the northernmost point of the Main Ethiopian Rift, where the earth's crust is breaking apart. In ancient calderas the desert becomes a kaleidoscope of mineral colour as fissures and fistulas, hot springs and geysers, bubble and toil. Further off stands a volcano whose lava lake is a spectacular cauldron of rumbling fire. An hour or so from that spectacle is Abaca, the first camp of this calibre in this part of the world. As the desert dusk gathers, it seems as unreal as a mirage. offering simple pleasures in a wild place: flush loos and a bucket shower, chilled wine and a fine dinner of grilled fish and salads, comfortable beds pulled outside so you can sleep under a blanket of stars. And in the morning when you awake, camel caravans are passing, silently, on those great padded feet as they carry the blocks of salt towards the Highlands, towards civilisation, in a trade that once helped to make the Queen of Sheba rich. **STANLEY STEWART** *Book Abaca Camp through Journeys by Design* (+44 1273 623790; www.journeysbydesign.com) from £600 per person per night full board, with a recommended three-night stay



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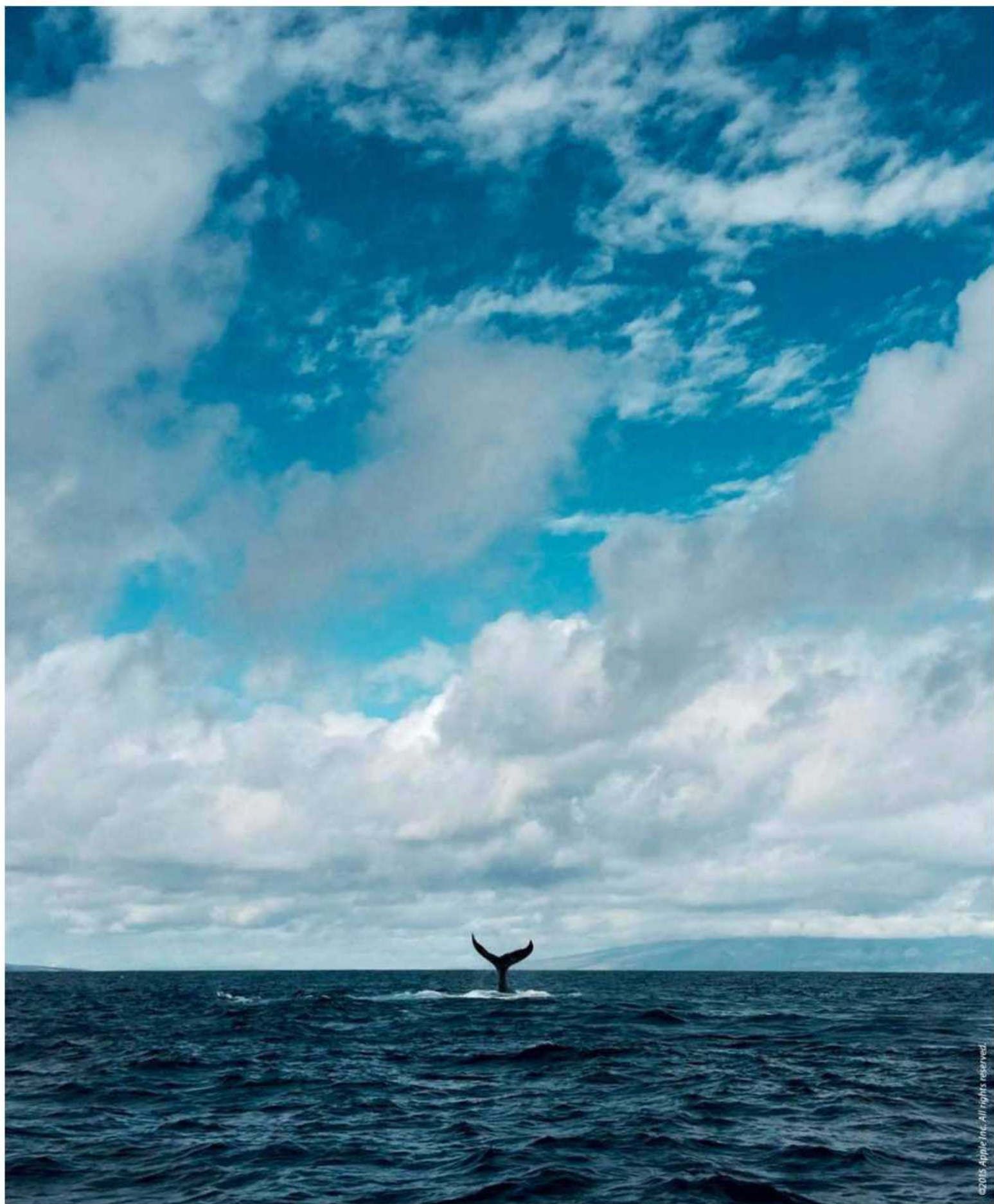
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